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General Assembly
Sixty-fifth session

Official Records

15th plenary meeting
Friday, 24 September 2010, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Deiss ..... (Switzerland)

The meeting was called to order at 3.25 p.m.

Address by Ms. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, President of the Republic of Liberia

The President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Liberia.

Ms. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, President of the Republic of Liberia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations Her Excellency Ms. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, President of the Republic of Liberia, and to invite her to address the Assembly.

President Johnson-Sirleaf: I am honoured to address this sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly on behalf of the people of Liberia. I congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election to lead this Assembly and am convinced that you will bring to the office your wealth of experience as a former President and Foreign Minister of the Swiss Confederation.

Let me express appreciation to your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Ali Abdussalam Treki, for the capable manner in which he conducted the affairs of the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly.

Allow me also to extend highest commendation to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his unwavering commitment to the Organization and his efficient management of its affairs.

I wish to congratulate President Jacob Zuma and the Government and people of South Africa on having successfully hosted the 2010 World Cup for the first time on our African continent. They made Africa proud, and we in turn are proud of them.

Some four years ago, I stood at this rostrum and told the story of a country exhibiting the symptoms of two decades of self-destruction: a criminalized and collapsed economy, a suffocating external debt overhang, dysfunctional institutions, destroyed infrastructure, a pariah nation in a state of decay, and a people in a state of despair. All of this translated into hundreds of thousands in refugee camps, equal numbers of the talented in the diaspora, and thousands of women, young people and children struggling for survival.

Today, I stand here to report on the progress that can be made from the collective effort of a resilient people, a responsive partnership, and effective leadership. We have come to report with confidence that Liberia is well on the way to recovery. In less than five years, our economy has experienced an average annual growth rate of 6.5 per cent, despite the drag on the two-digit potential occasioned by the 2009 global economic crisis.

I can say with pride that, having successfully carried out the reforms required under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative, on 17 September, at the Paris Club, the final segment of Liberia's $4.9-billion external debt was written off the books. I can report that we have opened the economy to put the private sector at the centre of our

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development effort and thereby have attracted some $16 billion in private investment in the reactivation of our mining, agriculture and forestry sectors. In addition, a new potential was recently discovered in oil exploration.

The results of reform in our security sector, enhanced by the continued deployment of the United Nations peacekeeping force, have stabilized the security situation in the country, where people move freely around. Experience in this regard shows that peacekeeping and peacebuilding can and should take place concurrently, and we are pleased that Liberia is now formally placed on the agenda of the Peacebuilding Commission to enable us to chart the way for a smooth transition from peacekeeping and peacebuilding to recovery.

Moreover, we have encouraged a vibrant environment in which people have exercised their inalienable rights to free expression, association, religion and access to the press without hindrance. Nobody has been molested on account of views expressed. Liberia has no prisoners of conscience in detention, nor does anyone have cause to flee in fear for their life or safety on account of their political beliefs or association.

Thus, in promoting a liberal environment in which freedom, equity and equality are exercised as the best guarantees of peace, security and stability, we can boast of being counted among the Governments that have demonstrated commitment to good governance and proven respect for human rights.

Regionally, Liberia continues to demonstrate its commitment to good-neighbourliness, peaceful coexistence and respect for the sovereign integrity of other nations. We actively participate in subregional and regional affairs through the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States, the Community of Sahel-Saharan States, and the Mano River Union. The Mano River Union is currently under Liberia's chairmanship, and this has allowed us to stay engaged with our members, Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire, as they embark upon their political transitions.

We hail the recent breakthrough by President Barack Obama in bringing the Palestinians and Israelis back to the negotiating table and holding their leaders to their words to fulfil their promise to remain engaged and conduct direct talks aimed at ending that long-running crisis.

Because we live in a global village, a continued crisis in any Member State or region should warrant our concern. Moreover, an unending crisis contradicts the cardinal objective of the United Nations, which is the promotion of international peace and security. In that regard, we suggest that the situation in Somalia warrants a Chapter VII intervention. In a country that has gone many years without a stable constitutional Government, the presence of pirates, extremists and other terrorist elements there should sound the alarm. The world needs to act promptly, as we cannot afford to see Somalia remain a haven for anarchists and extremists.

That is why our Government supports the role of the African Union in fielding troops in Somalia. We call for more troop deployment from other countries, and we strongly support action to put an end to the Somali quagmire. We also call on the Somalis themselves to accept dialogue and go to the negotiating table to thrash out their differences and restore their country to rightful peace and dignity. While we acknowledge the right of States to self-defence and the promotion of programmes in support of national interests, we call on them to do so responsibly, with respect for international public opinion and the protocols and conventions surrounding such developments.

At this week's Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) summit, we reaffirmed Liberia's commitment to continuing to work for the achievement of all eight Goals, although we are implementing those Goals under a more challenging context. Our national development agenda and programmes for ensuring national reconciliation, good governance and the rule of law, national security, food security, and the implementation of our poverty reduction strategy are consistent with the objectives of the MDGs. Our progress bears the fruits of this commitment.

We are pleased to note the progress the world has made in the advancement of women. Today, there is greater representation of women in Government, in political life, business and civil society. Liberia's own effort was recognized on Sunday when we received an award for our progress on MDG 3, on the empowerment of women. We also commend this body and the Secretary-General for their work in establishing the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, and we

applaud the appointment of the former President of Chile, Michelle Bachelet, to take on this responsibility.

We have five years left to go to achieve the MDGs. For us, it is not the target date that matters; rather, it is the commitment to achieving the Goals that is important. We therefore call upon our partner countries to support the realization of the Goals through strong global partnership, as recommended in MDG 8. We believe in the partnerships we have enjoyed with the bilateral and multilateral institutions that have made our progress possible. We call upon all in this Hall to secure the strength of this partnership, which benefits all of our countries, by supporting the replenishment of the resources of the World Bank and the African Development Bank.

Liberia's progress is not without challenges. The satisfactory security environment of which I speak is still fragile, and made more so by the political uncertainties in our subregion. We also continue to face the tensions associated with the thousands of our young people who, lacking skills, are still unemployed. Moreover, we continue to manage the raised expectations expressed in the demand from villages and communities across the country for essential infrastructure such as roads, schools and clinics. Perhaps the greatest challenge we face is to go beyond the measures we have taken in formulating a public service code of conduct, in introducing new procurement and financial management systems, and in establishing and strengthening the pillars of integrity — all aimed at addressing long-standing corruption. Reform of the judicial system and efforts to change an inherited value system are additional measures that are under way.

Another challenge is Liberia's vulnerability to organized cross-border crime, including drug and human trafficking, as the result of porous borders and limited law-enforcement capacity, with weak national security organizations. Against this background, we recently signed the Freetown Commitment on Combating Illicit Trafficking of Drugs and Transnational Organized Crime in West Africa, which should assist us in promoting capacity-building in the region to combat transnational crime.

The root cause of civil crisis in Liberia was the consistent failure of democratic transitions that would usher in Governments elected by the people. With the support of the United Nations, multiparty democratic elections were held in 2005, following the end of the civil crisis. In keeping with our Constitution, the Liberian people will once again exercise the right of choice when we hold elections in 2011.

The 2011 elections will mark a groundbreaking turning point. They will complete Liberia's transition to full constitutional rule and participatory democracy. This will be the true test of Liberia's progress on the road to development and its defining moment, which, if successful, will serve as proof that we can truly stay on an irreversible course towards peace and development. It is absolutely essential that everything be done to ensure a peaceful, legitimate and transparent process. I wish to state categorically that my Government is completely and fully committed to this objective, and we call on the international community to stay with Liberia on this last stretch. Already, the process leading to the holding of elections in 2011 has begun with the release of the election timetable.

As a founding Member of this Organization, Liberia remains inspired by the noble objectives of the United Nations in meeting enormous global challenges. We believe in its ability to formulate and implement programmes, particularly those aimed at raising the standard of living of people, forging global cooperation and solidarity, and encouraging dialogue to reduce tension and conflicts.

In closing, we say again that Liberia is on the way to recovery. We have thrown off the label of a pariah State. We have restored hope to our people, credibility and honour to our national integrity, and won international creditworthiness and respect. Our confidence in the future of our country is firm. Our new vision of a rising Liberia seeks to move us to a middle-income country by the year 2030. This is an aggressive goal, but we are determined, and through efficiency in the allocation and use of our natural resources, we will succeed. We thank you, Sir, and all the members of this noble institution for the support that has brought Liberia to this point of progress.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Liberia for the statement she has just made.

Ms. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, President of the Republic of Liberia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Juan Manuel Santos Calderón, President of the Republic of Colombia

The President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Colombia.

Mr. Juan Manuel Santos Calderón, President of the Republic of Colombia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Juan Manuel Santos Calderón, President of the Republic of Colombia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Santos Calderón (*spoke in Spanish*): With reverence and an immense sense of responsibility, I come to this historic forum for the first time to reiterate the commitment of my country and more than 45 million Colombians to the fulfilment and success of the founding principles of the United Nations. As this Organization proceeds in its reform process, we support its adoption of the criteria of good governance, efficiency and transparency in order to realize those principles and to achieve a more effective international system of cooperation.

We believe that the United Nations should focus on achieving concrete results that transform realities rather than deepen conditions of dependency or perpetuate assistance programmes that often do more harm than good in developing countries. It is in this belief and with faith in the future of the Organization that I express today before this Assembly my country's aspiration to become a member of the Security Council for the period 2011-2012. We seek that position on the basis of respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter and with the commitment to providing our fullest cooperation to the maintenance of international peace and security.

Colombia — which, along with other Latin American nations, commemorates its two-hundredth year of independence this year — has a long and successful democratic and institutional tradition. Our Republic has suffered the attacks of terrorism and the ravages of international crime, but we have always faced them within the framework of our Constitution and laws, following the most rigorous democratic procedures. We are confident that our long and painful experience can be very useful to all States Members of the Organization in matters in which we have developed a strong technical and operational capacity, such as security, the struggle against terrorism and drug trafficking, the fight against the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, the progressive eradication of anti-personnel mines, humanitarian assistance, the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of illegal armed groups, and — of particular importance — how to do so while always protecting human rights.

As advocates of peaceful coexistence, we Colombians are proud to participate in peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations, such as the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti, the Multinational Force and Observers in Sinai, and the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone. This participation reflects our commitment to peace anywhere in the world, which we reaffirm today.

That is why we want to be the voice of Latin America and the Caribbean in the Security Council at this very special moment for our region. Latin America and the Caribbean, a region of some 600 million inhabitants, is our area of natural interaction. The region includes countries with multiple political visions and diverse positions on many specific topics. But we are united in the interest of overcoming poverty, improving the living standards of our people, integrating ourselves successfully into the global market, and protecting our environment.

Latin American nations are beginning to assume a global leadership role on economic, environmental, security and development issues. In my inaugural speech on 7 August, I said that, given the significant progress achieved by my country, the time for Colombia had come. Today, in this global forum, I wish to go further and state with absolute conviction that the time has come for Latin America.

We Latin Americans have assumed the management of our economies with responsibility. As a result, we were one of the regions least affected by the global economic crisis. Today, our countries are growing on the basis of economic, social and technological pillars that are stronger than ever and attracting investors from throughout the world. We are a subcontinent where the majority of the population is young, with immense talents and ability to work, with cities and natural wonders that attract tourists and

investors from all over the world, and with unparalleled environmental wealth.

In these times, when the world demands food, water, biofuels and natural lungs for the Earth such as the tropical forests, Latin America has millions of hectares ready for cultivation without affecting the ecological balance, and all the willingness necessary to become a supplier of all the goods that humanity needs for its own survival.

More than 925 million people living with hunger and malnutrition are a challenge that cannot be postponed. Latin America can and wants to be part of the solution. Ours is the region richest in biodiversity on the planet, with the most megadiverse country in the world, namely Brazil, and the country with the greatest biodiversity per square kilometre, namely our country, Colombia. The Amazon region alone holds 20 per cent of the global supply of fresh water and 50 per cent of the planet's biodiversity.

Colombia is not a country with high levels of polluting emissions, but we want to assume our responsibility to the planet and its future. We therefore support the international initiative known as Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation, which seeks to generate and allocate the resources necessary to reduce tropical forest loss and associated emissions. We Colombians want to be a model country for the world in monitoring its forests, carbon emissions and the state of its biodiversity.

Latin America as a whole must be a key region in saving the planet. We call for a new agreement to replace the Kyoto Protocol, which expires in 2012, to ensure the commitment of all — starting with the big industrial Powers — to emissions reduction. With appropriate economic compensation, we have an enormous capacity to reduce deforestation and plant new forests, changing the history not only of the region but of the world as a whole.

When the twenty-first century began, Latin America and the Caribbean were just starting their march towards integration into the global economy. Today, 10 years later, in the light of our political and economic stability and agricultural, energy and environmental potential, I want to send a message to the other nations of our region. The world's eyes are upon us. Now is the time for us to open our own eyes, to overcome any persisting differences among us, and to think big. If we do so, and given everything I have just said, we can declare with one voice, as I do today at the dawn of the second decade of the third millennium: This is Latin America's decade. It will be a decade in which we can grow and advance, and first and foremost in which we can serve our peoples and the well-being of humankind.

Two days ago, I had the opportunity to present Colombia's results in its progress towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. I am not now going to repeat our achievements — which have been many — or our remaining challenges, which are many more. I simply want to underline that, more than any other problem, poverty, with all its related consequences, is the greatest calamity in our world.

I want to call attention in particular to the twofold tragedy faced by a brother Caribbean country, which, along with its endemic poverty, is coping with the effects of a devastating natural disaster. I was in Haiti a couple of months ago and I must say, before this Assembly of the nations of the world and with a saddened heart, that its unbearable reality surpasses the worst nightmare. The pledged international aid is yet to arrive in its entirety, or at least it is not visible. Haitians are still fighting and surviving with dignity and courage, but without the due attention we must give to their situation, which can bear no delay. I call on the Security Council to consider transforming the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti into a true development operation that responds to Haiti's needs and achieves concrete results.

In these difficult economic times, especially for industrialized nations, with high unemployment and stagnation, global solidarity tends to vanish from among our priorities. That is a mistake. Turning one's back on international cooperation and trade helps no one, and we are convinced that selfishness harms everyone, and the industrialized world more than any. Where else are consumers going to come from if not from the millions of poor who have until now been left at the margins of progress? Who, other than societies filled with enthusiastic young people, can contribute to the dynamism that mature nations need? What economic space, other than the developing world, is available to satisfy the needs of humankind in the coming decades? Collective prosperity has advanced the most precisely when millions have been involved in development, and the darkest moments of our planet's economy have been those of exclusion and barriers.

I cannot close without referring to two global scourges — terrorism and drug trafficking — that feed off each other, because it is often the money from illicit drugs that finances terrorists acts and groups. Perhaps more than any other country, Colombia has been a victim of these phenomena, but it has also been a model in the fight against them and a champion of the need to act together with the international community, under the principle of shared responsibility.

Our democratic security policy — a policy of security for all with respect for the law — is also a human rights policy because we have been able to dramatically reduce the crimes and behaviours that most threaten the lives and fundamental rights of our people, such as homicide, kidnapping and displacement. We were the first country to comprehensively apply the principles of truth, justice and reparation in the demobilization of illegal armed groups. The Colombian State and society are committed to defending and promoting human rights. We do so out of conviction — deep conviction — and not by imposition.

We have achieved great results in the fight against drug trafficking. There has been a substantial reduction in hectares where coca is grown, and we are committed to pursuing this task until those crops are completely eradicated. We have hit hard the mafias that control this business, including guerrilla groups that have become veritable drug cartels. We will continue to fight them relentlessly and without quarter. We will spare no effort. Just yesterday, from this very city, I announced to the world the news of the death of the highest-ranking military leader of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia in an operation impeccably conducted by our armed forces. This is the most important and decisive blow against that terrorist group in its history, and we hope it will bring us closer to peace.

We want to achieve peace either by reason or by force, and we will achieve it so that we can dedicate and focus all our energies on achieving development and prosperity for our people. In the fight against drug trafficking, we have lost many of our best soldiers, policemen, leaders, judges and journalists. Still, their blood has not been shed in vain. From a failed State in which violent actors, financed by drug trafficking, had distorted our democracy, today we look at the world from a thriving democracy rising towards democratic prosperity for all. We defeated the big drug cartels, but this business has not come to an end yet. That is why we will keep on fighting it, because for us it is a matter of national security.

We are concerned and distressed that our relative success has led to other countries of the region suffering the growing presence and activities of drug trafficking in their territories. The world needs to open its eyes, because to be in denial with respect to this problem could be fatal. It happened to us at a very high cost.

We Colombians are more than willing to cooperate with States that need it, and we are already doing so with several countries in Central America and the Caribbean, with Mexico and even in Afghanistan. But, it is very important that we be consistent on this issue. I say this as representative of the country with the highest moral authority to speak of this scourge, because no other nation has suffered like ours the disastrous consequences of drug trafficking.

We note with concern the contradictory stance of some countries that, on the one hand, demand a head-on fight against drug trafficking and, on the other, legalize consumption or study the possibility of legalizing the production and trade of certain illicit drugs. How can I or anyone tell a peasant in my country that he or she will be prosecuted and punished for growing crops for drug production, while in other countries such activity is being legalized? These contradictions make it urgent — and on this matter we join the call by President Leonel Fernández Reyna of the Dominican Republic — that we agree to review the global strategy against illicit drugs in order to draft a single global policy that is more effective and within which all countries will contribute equally to this effort.

Thanks to the significant security, economic and social achievements accomplished in recent years through the efforts of many Colombians and the leadership of my predecessor, President Álvaro Uribe, today Colombia finds itself at the dawn of a new morning. I came to office with the commitment to fight poverty and unemployment and to lead my country towards not only economic but also social prosperity that reaches everyone, above all the poorest. I have proposed a Government of national unity in which all Colombians are united to create jobs and greater welfare. I foresee with great optimism our future as a nation.

Today, I present myself before this global forum with respect, humility, a sense of history and an awareness of our own limitations to say that we can do nothing alone, neither in my country nor in the world. Only united and only with respect, solidarity and tolerance will humankind be able to know a better tomorrow.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Colombia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Juan Manuel Santos Calderón, President of the Republic of Colombia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Robert G. Mugabe, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe

The President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Zimbabwe.

Mr. Robert G. Mugabe, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Robert G. Mugabe, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Mugabe: Allow me once again to extend to you, Sir, our warmest congratulations on your election as President of General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session. I would, at the same time, like to assure you of Zimbabwe's support and cooperation during your presidency.

We are meeting today to reaffirm our commitment to the United Nations and, in particular, to its comprehensive agenda for the promotion of peace and security, sustainable development and human rights. We are, however, concerned that the world today continues to witness unbridled acts of aggression, wars, conflicts, terrorism and rising levels of poverty. We are also alarmed that powerful States, which daily preach peace and good governance, continue to trample with impunity upon the sovereignty of poor and weak nations. Zimbabwe yearns for a community of nations that recognizes and respects the sovereign equality of all nations, big and small, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. We all have positive roles to play in promoting peace and development for the benefit of present and future generations.

As Members of the United Nations, we have recognized the pressing need to reform our Organization to make it better able to carry out its various mandates. Zimbabwe stands ready to work closely with you, Sir, as well as with other Member States, to ensure that the reform process is speeded up and carried out on the basis of consensus and democratic participation.

Most immediately, we must find ways and means to re-establish and assert the pre-eminent role of the United Nations in advancing peace and security, development and the achievement of internationally agreed goals, particularly the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Why are the developed Western countries, especially those permanent members of the Security Council with the veto, resisting the democratization of the United Nations organs, especially the Security Council? Are they not the ones who talk glibly about democracy in regard to our developing countries? Or are they sanctimonious hypocrites whose actions contradict their sermons to us?

As we all know, the General Assembly is the most representative organ of the United Nations. Its position as the chief deliberative policymaking organ of the United Nations should therefore be respected. We need to move with haste and find common ground on how to revitalize the Assembly to enable it to fulfil its mandate as the most important body of the Organization. Most important, this process of revitalization must redress the continued encroachment by the Security Council on issues that fall within the General Assembly's purview and competence.

Our position on the reform of the Security Council is well known. It is completely unacceptable that Africa remains the only continent without permanent representation on the Council. That historical injustice must be corrected. We therefore urge Member States, including those that have vested interests in maintaining the status quo, to give due and fair consideration to Africa's legitimate demand for two permanent seats, with full powers of veto, plus two additional non-permanent seats. Africa's plea for justice cannot continue to be ignored. We all have an

obligation to make the Council more representative, more democratic and more accountable.

Zimbabwe continues to advocate greater equality in international economic relations and decision-making structures. We therefore recognize the centrality of the United Nations in setting the global development agenda and believe that it is only a more coherent United Nations system which can better support the realization of all the internationally agreed development goals.

The developing world, particularly Africa, continues to suffer from the effects of the global economic and financial crises. It is important to understand that the critical issues we face today cannot be addressed effectively when so many countries and regions are left out of the key decision-making processes of the institutions of global governance.

We need to participate in the making of policies and decisions that affect our very livelihoods. It is for this reason that we have called, and continue to call, for the reform of multilateral financial institutions, including the Bretton Woods institutions.

It is clear that climate change is now one of the most pressing global issues of our time. Copenhagen failed to produce a successor to the Kyoto Protocol, an outcome that many of us had hoped for. Yet that Conference was significant in its own way. It demonstrated the futility of attempts by the rich and powerful to impose their views and policies on the poor and weak.

What we need is not an imposition of solutions based on self-interest, but a consensus on the reduction of harmful emissions and a climate-change regime that balances adaptation and mitigation backed by the transfer of technology and resources.

We need to pay special attention to the three pillars of sustainable development, namely, economic growth, social development and environmental protection. In doing so, we should implement the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. It is our hope that when our negotiators meet in Cancún, Mexico, this December, they will produce an outcome that addresses the needs of those most affected by the effects of climate change.

Global food security continues to be a matter of great concern, particularly in the light of increased drought and flooding. We reiterate our call for an urgent and substantial increase in investment in agriculture in developing countries. Global efforts to address the food crisis, the impact of climate change, and the drive to achieve the MDGs must go hand in hand.

It is disappointing that the Doha Development Round has stalled, despite nine years of negotiations, mainly due to the intransigence of some countries. The Doha Round of trade must not be allowed to die but must, instead, remain focused on development, as was originally envisaged.

We also call on the developed world to show commitment to global food security by increasing trade and access to their markets. Developing countries need to break away from the unending cycle of humanitarian assistance, and this can be achieved if they have increased access to developed- country markets.

Zimbabwe strongly condemns the use of unilateral economic sanctions and other coercive measures in international relations. Such measures are completely at cross purposes with the principles of international cooperation as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. I say this because my country continues to be a victim of illegal sanctions imposed by the European Union and the United States without any reference to the United Nations and with the evil intention of causing regime change. These illegal sanctions have caused untold suffering among Zimbabweans, who alone should be the deciders of regime change.

Our Inclusive Government is united against these illegal sanctions and has made repeated appeals without success for their immediate and unconditional removal. The rest of the international community, including the Southern African Development Community, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa and the African Union, has similarly called for the removal of the sanctions, but these calls have gone unheeded.

We urge those who imposed these iniquitous sanctions to heed the call by the international community to unconditionally remove them. The people of Zimbabwe should, like people of every other sovereign State, be left to freely chart their own destiny.

Every year, this body adopts a resolution on ending the economic, commercial and financial

embargo imposed by the United States on Cuba. To this date, those resolutions have gone unheeded by the United States and the result has been the continued suffering of the people of Cuba. Zimbabwe joins the Non-Aligned Movement and other well-meaning countries which call for the immediate lifting of the ruinous embargo.

Zimbabwe has expressed its concerns with regard to the continued stalemate in the Middle East peace process. It is unacceptable that, decades on, peace continues to elude that part of the world. We call upon all parties involved, particularly Israel, to respect the relevant resolutions passed by the United Nations. It is our sincere hope that the current negotiations under way will be inclusive and eventually lead to the cherished goal of a sovereign State of Palestine, thus ending decades of suffering for the Palestinian people.

Since its inception in February 2009, our Inclusive Government has fostered an environment of peace and stability. Several reforms have been implemented, and the Government has created and instituted constitutional bodies agreed to in the Global Political Agreement (GPA). The constitutional outreach programme is currently under way and upon its conclusion a new draft constitution will be formulated as precursor to a referendum next year, hopefully to be followed by an election.

Achievements in the economic area include the revitalization of capacity utilization in industries, the containment of inflation, improvement of service delivery in health and education, as well as the rehabilitation of basic infrastructure such as roads, water and sanitation facilities.

Mr. Askarov (Uzbekistan), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The three parties to our GPA have worked hard to implement most of the issues that we agreed on. To maintain the momentum, we need the support of the region and that of the international community. In this regard we commend the Southern African Development Community, the African Union, the Non-Aligned Movement and indeed like-minded members of the international community for giving us their support. We believe that constructive engagement, and not isolation and punishment, will bring the necessary impetus to the efforts of our inclusive Government. Our great country is indeed marching forward in peace and unity.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Zimbabwe for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Robert G. Mugabe, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. René Garcia Préval, President of the Republic of Haiti

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Haiti.

Mr. René Garcia Préval, President of the Republic of Haiti, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. René Garcia Préval, President of the Republic of Haiti, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Préval (*spoke in French*): My first words will be to pay tribute to the memory of hundreds of thousands of Haitians and those who came to help — including about 100 United Nations staff, in particular Mr. Hédi Annabi, Special Representative of the Secretary-General — who all lost their lives during the earthquake that struck Haiti on 12 January.

But every tragedy offers some solace in terms of human solidarity. Therefore once again on behalf of the Haitian people and on my personal behalf I would like to thank all the people and Governments across the world, ranging from the Dominican Republic, our closely attached neighbour, to those at the far corners of the globe, that rushed to our assistance. That assistance was crucially important to us, in particular during the first few weeks when the need was so urgent.

Allow me to also thank those Haitians living abroad, in New York, Miami, Chicago, Montreal, Paris, Santo Domingo, the French West Indies and many other parts of the world, who joined the great international solidarity movement and, in their commitment, endeavoured for the most part to establish structures that would help our country rebuild.

I would be remiss were I not to pay special tribute here, publicly, to the people of Haiti

themselves, a people who have been deprived of everything and yet who have demonstrated the immeasurable wealth of their humanity. Towns that had been destroyed did not become the scenes of widespread looting. The people showed such dignity and kindness, such exemplary stamina in their suffering, such boldness, devotion and courage, such solidarity, spirit of self-sacrifice and love for others. Those are the words that come to mind and I think that is how we must describe the acts of heroism of the Haitian people. Let us show our respect for them.

My country has lived a unique history since its birth immediately after a war of independence that took the lives of one third of its people and caused unimaginable destruction. And in the wake of the American and French revolutions of the eighteenth century, that war of independence challenged the human race to recognize the universal character of the proclamation of humankind's right to freedom, dignity and equality by making the men and women of Haiti free.

Our nation was born in 1804 and, although poor and since then deprived of resources, it has never hesitated to extend material support to peoples struggling for freedom, including in greater Colombia, which is today Venezuela, Ecuador, Colombia and Panama, under the leadership of Francisco Miranda and then Simón Bolívar.

Despite our limited resources, Haiti has always demonstrated its firm belief in one human race. And therefore we fully appreciate that immense movement of solidarity and compassion of the international community for our country, from the moments immediately after the earthquake right up to the commitment on 31 March at the New York conference by which it agreed to participate in rebuilding Haiti on the basis of the plan of action prepared by the Haitian Government.

Since then, with the assistance of the international community and support from the United Nations, we have set up a commission to coordinate resources for rebuilding. This commission is an important strategic mechanism for helping the country manage transparently and with discipline the resources mobilized within the international community to support our country as it rebuilds. The commission has already adopted over 30 projects, on education, health, infrastructure and so forth, costing over $1 billion.

May I extend my thanks to those countries and agencies that have followed up on their commitments to make financial contributions. I trust that a similar effort will be made by others as well so as to help us respond quickly to the over one million Haitians who are still living in tent cities and temporary shelter.

We have just held an important high-level meeting on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Ten years ago, when 189 countries met here to make the collective commitment to achieving the eight Millennium Development Goals by the year 2015, the international community was actually in agreement on what the world should look like in 2015 — a world well on the way to reducing extreme poverty, where children and mothers would not have to die because of lack of health care, where all children would be able to go to school, where millions of people would no longer die of hunger every year, where women would be able to fulfil their potential in a society without any gender-based discrimination.

That vision was the right one, because it placed human dignity at the very heart of all development programmes and the international cooperation agenda. And that vision also had the advantage of providing countries and their partners in the international community with a clear, straightforward structure for planning development and organizing cooperation with the countries that were committed to help achieve the Goals.

While significant progress has been made in the right direction, five years from 2015 there is still a long road to travel because the developed countries have not fully lived up to the commitments made with respect to the Millennium Development Goals, particularly their financial commitments.

What shall I say about the trillions of dollars that have been swallowed up over the last 10 years in wars that have been as bloody as they were unjustified?

What shall I say about the defence budgets which every year exceed by far what would be needed to attain the Millennium Development Goals?

And what shall I say about the incalculable wealth that has simply evaporated in speculation, in the arrogant supremacy of the virtual economy over the real economy?

Are we going to continue sacrificing the well-being and lives of millions of human beings, the future of planet Earth, to this culture of fear and greed?

What shall I say about the fact that official development assistance continues to fall, when in 2005 the developed countries committed to doubling the amount by 2010?

What happened to the decision to encourage a more open trading system, when assistance to farmers in developed countries is over three times the amount of official development assistance?

In truth, the globalization that began centuries ago, with the colonization and the importation of African captives to work as slaves on sugar-cane and coffee plantations, whose products would then be exported to the West or the North, needs to be reinvented.

The time has come for us to invent a new kind of globalization, one that is based on the simple concept of our common humanity, on trust, cooperation and mutual respect, on respect for our environment and all forms of life in it. We must, as a matter of urgency, do away with a vision that sees profit as a veritable god, reduces citizens to the level of simple consumers, and regards planet Earth as a colony that we can destroy. The global village will not be able to maintain forever its fashionable neighbourhoods side by side with wretched slums where humanity is dissolving: a socio-economic North and South — not a geographic one.

In Haiti, living on an island in a part of the world that has always been swept by hurricanes, we are particularly worried about global warming and the climatic disturbances that come with it: more frequent and more devastating cyclones and a rising sea-level.

Must the poor continue to pay for the waste, the unbridled appetite for energy of their wealthier brethren? Must they renounce their efforts to improve their standard of living in order to feed the consumer frenzy of the industrialized countries?

The so-called war against drugs consists of a few little skirmishes in the consumer countries but full-scale bloody battles in the production and transit countries, whose very existence is sometimes jeopardized.

Are the countries of the South still to be pilloried as responsible for the production and transit of illegal drugs even though the engine for this lucrative trafficking is demand for drugs in countries of the North?

What shall I say about the arms trafficking, which flows from the North to the South and supports the drug trafficking?

It is for us to provide the answer to those questions, and we cannot sidestep them much longer without rushing to our common doom. The only hope lies in a renewed humanism, clear-sighted, embracing of all life and the environment, on which we are dependent and for which we are responsible. In that sense, South-South cooperation affords new promise, and I invite the leaders of the countries of the South to strengthen those channels for the well-being of our respective peoples.

Some of the statements I have heard in this session of the General Assembly seem to presage a new and different consciousness, which may be what is required for our vision of a new humanity. Still, as always, we must be mindful to that commitments and action match the expansive rhetoric.

This is the moment for Haiti to renew its call for the lifting of the embargo against Cuba. Besides having been condemned in many Assembly resolutions, an embargo of this kind is absolutely contrary to the values we advocate in matters of international commerce.

I would be remiss if I were not to convey, on behalf of the Haitian people, our condolences to the many peoples who have suffered lately from natural disasters in Chile, China, Pakistan, Guatemala and Mexico.

I shall conclude by referring to the presidential and legislative elections that will mark the end of my term and the end of a particularly difficult year for the people of Haiti. It is important that that difficult process be conducted with rigour, fairness and transparency, so as to consolidate our young democracy. Therefore I appeal to all national actors and our international friends, so that together we can make our way through that electoral crossroads successfully.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Haiti for the statement he has just made.

Mr. René Garcia Préval, President of the Republic of Haiti, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Rwanda.

Mr. Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Kagame: At this sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly, it is right that we re-examine the role of the United Nations in global governance, as we strive to help it adapt as fast as our times are changing, so that it serves all its Members equally.

In my understanding, global governance recognizes the inevitable and welcome interconnectedness of nations, the unique circumstances and contributions of each and the principle of mutual respect. I say "welcome" because, as we have seen, major threats of a global scale — like the financial crisis, climate change, terrorism, poverty and other challenges to world peace — need the concerted efforts of all nations if they are to be addressed effectively.

The just-concluded High-level Plenary Meeting on the Millennium Development Goals has provided us another opportunity to assess the role of the United Nations, measure the progress we have made and consider the hurdles that remain in meeting the various Goals we set for ourselves. It is evident that the United Nations is uniquely placed to play a crucial role in mobilizing and galvanizing all nations for the common good, driving forward our collective initiatives and coordinating actions that foster the social and economic development of all.

Still, the United Nations is the sum total of Member States, and it can only be as good as the constituent Members want it to be. If there were a common understanding and shared values among all Member States, the Organization would deliver more efficiently on its mandate. But it has become clear that the United Nations has evolved into a two-tier organization, reflecting a world that seems to be divided into two major categories: one considered to have inherent, laudable values, rights and liberties, and another that needs to be taught and coached on those values.

My country and many in the developing world seem to fall into that second category. Not only marginalized and disenfranchised, we are also considered chronic violators of our own human rights. The implication is that the United Nations holds a certain standard for some countries, and another for others, especially on international issues concerning which every single Member should be treated equally under the law.

In my view, a debate between those two categories is urgently needed within the United Nations membership so as to regain the noble founding ideals of the Organization. No entity is better placed than our common United Nations to bring equality and respect, despite disparities in economic status.

The same situation pertains in the realm of international justice and the rule of law. Rwanda subscribes to the principle that everyone and every State is accountable to laws and that the rule of law should govern us all. But these laws must truly be equally enforced and independently adjudicated.

Reaffirming the role of the United Nations in global governance presupposes strengthening and reforming it to make it more effective and efficient in its response to global challenges. The impetus to reform our global governance structures, however, is the desire to ensure that they are equipped to deal with those challenges and secure a brighter future for all the citizens of the world.

When there are no avenues for appealing international rulings, when there is an accountability deficit in key global institutions and when ordinary citizens feel that the United Nations cannot deal adequately with the issues affecting their daily lives, the United Nations cannot be seen as credible, relevant and democratic. We should make sure the Organization does not become a tool for the powerful to protect their interests and enhance their influence or use it in subjugating others.

Rwanda believes in multilateralism and understands that global challenges can be effectively resolved only through international cooperation. The United Nations must continue to be at the centre of that agenda and play its role without bias or prejudice.

As we in Rwanda continue to rebuild our country, we have become acutely aware of the need for lasting peace and security in our region and have worked hard to achieve it. We know that stability is the key prerequisite for our development and the improved lives of our citizens and our neighbours, and we have unreservedly committed ourselves to attaining it. We will continue to work in partnership with our neighbours, international and regional organizations and the African Union to ensure that peace and security prevail and that Africa fully realizes its potential.

Lastly, let me say that each of our countries, separately and collectively, has a duty to the people of the entire world, especially the most vulnerable.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Rwanda for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Hifikepunye Pohamba, President of the Republic of Namibia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Namibia.

Mr. Hifikepunye Pohamba, President of the Republic of Namibia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Hifikepunye Pohamba, President of the Republic of Namibia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Pohamba: I wish to congratulate Mr. Deiss on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session. We are confident that he will discharge the responsibilities of his high office with wisdom. I assure him of Namibia's cooperation and support. I would also like to commend his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Ali Abdussalam Treki, for the able manner in which he presided over the sixty-fourth session.

The Secretary-General of the Organization, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, and his staff have done a commendable job in overseeing the ongoing efforts to improve the working methods of the Organization and for better interaction with Member States. We commend them for their dedication and hard work.

The theme for this year's session, "Reaffirming the central role of the United Nations in global governance", is both timely and appropriate. In that spirit, Member States should reaffirm the central role of the United Nations in global governance. Namibia shares the views expressed in the outcome document of the Conference on the World Financial and Economic Crisis and Its Impact on Development (resolution 63/303, annex).

We believe that because of its universal membership and legitimacy, the United Nations is well positioned to participate in the reform processes to improve and strengthen the effective functioning of the international financial system. In that regard, we must reaffirm our commitment to a universal, rules-based, open, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading system and also work together for a speedy and equitable conclusion to the Doha Round.

Although Namibia is currently classified as a high middle-income country, it still bears the scars of social and economic inequalities inherited from its colonial past. As a result, we carry the unenviable distinction as the country with the most unequal distribution of income and economic resources in the world. Ironically, our country also faces declining international development assistance due to that very classification, which has negatively impacted our ability to mobilize resources for national development efforts.

In that light, I appeal to the international financial institutions to create special mechanisms to enable middle-income countries to access financial resources for development on concessional terms, as called for by the 2008 Windhoek Declaration on Development Cooperation with Middle-Income Countries.

Our recently concluded High-level Plenary Meeting on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) gave world leaders and other stakeholders a unique opportunity to review progress made towards

the achievement of the MDGs and to share valuable experiences. It is also evident that more work remains to be done. The challenges encountered should encourage us, and the successes recorded should inspire us all to work relentlessly for the noble and common objectives of achieving all of the MDGs.

At the global level, climate change is one of the major challenges facing humanity today. The devastating impact of natural disasters around the world has affected most of our countries. Although Namibia does not significantly contribute to the emission of greenhouse gases, it is one of the countries most vulnerable to the effects of climate change. In recent years, we have experienced increasingly severe floods and droughts that have destroyed crops, livestock and wild animals. We thus call upon industrialized countries to take practical steps and demonstrate greater political will to bring about drastic reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. We also urge them to give meaningful support to the efforts of developing countries to mitigate and adapt to the adverse effects of climate change.

It is our hope that the industrialized countries will meet their commitments to provide adequate resources, in line with the undertakings made at Copenhagen in 2009. Namibia looks forward to a successful outcome of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in Mexico later this year.

In 2000, while serving as a member of the Security Council, Namibia initiated and introduced a theme on women, peace and security, which resulted in the adoption of the resolution 1325 (2000). Our objective was to highlight the plight of women in conflict situations and to recognize the vital role that they can play in peacemaking efforts for the effective resolution of conflicts. As we commemorate the first decade of that resolution, let us recommit ourselves to the protection of women and girls in conflict situations in all parts of the world.

We welcome the Assembly resolution on system-wide coherence and the establishment of UN Women as an entity dedicated to dealing with gender-related issues (resolution 64/289). We hope that that new entity will strengthen the institutional capacity of the United Nations for the support of gender equality and the empowerment of women. My delegation wishes to congratulate Ms. Michelle Bachelet on her appointment as UN Women's first head.

In August, Namibia assumed the chairmanship of the Southern African Development Community (SADC). In that capacity, we will work to promote cooperation with other regional economic communities in Africa, as the building blocks for intracontinental integration. SADC strives for political stability in the region as a prerequisite for sustainable development. In that connection, we have taken proactive steps to resolve the political crisis in Madagascar, through the facilitation efforts of former President Joachim Chissano of Mozambique.

The recent African Union (AU) summit, held in Kampala in July, focused on maternal, infant and child health and development in Africa. African leaders reaffirmed their commitment to mobilize and direct resources to check the deaths of women and children from preventable diseases.

Namibia has consistently urged the international community to fulfil its obligation to help the people of Western Sahara in their quest for self-determination. We therefore call for immediate and unconditional implementation of the United Nations Settlement Plan for Western Sahara and for the holding of a free and fair referendum, based on the terms of the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly.

Namibia is deeply concerned about the ongoing suffering and humiliation of the Palestinian people under Israeli occupation and the denial of their fundamental right to self-determination. It is encouraging, however, that direct negotiations have been resumed between the parties. We hope that a durable solution will be found without further delay and on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions.

Namibia is also concerned about the prolonged and extraterritorial economic embargo imposed on the people of Cuba. We fully support the decision of the AU summit in Kampala calling for the embargo's removal. We believe that the economic blockade is unjustifiable and unfair and should therefore be lifted.

Similarly, Namibia calls for lifting the economic sanctions imposed, directly or indirectly, on the Republic of Zimbabwe by some Western countries. Those sanctions have caused enormous suffering, not

only to the people of Zimbabwe, but also to other countries in the SADC region.

For many years now, we have been calling for comprehensive reform of the United Nations system, particularly the Security Council. The process must be finalized to render the Council more representative, democratic and accountable. It is unjust that Africa remains the only region of the world without permanent representation on the Security Council. In that connection, we reiterate our support for the African common position on Security Council reform, as articulated in the Ezulwini Consensus and the Sirte Declaration.

The maintenance of international peace and security is our collective responsibility. Namibia believes that peace, security and stability are the cornerstones of sustainable development, and thus we will continue to participate in United Nations and AU peacekeeping missions. We urge the international community to support conflict prevention and peacebuilding efforts around the world.

Recently, States parties to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty reaffirmed their commitment to nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful use of nuclear energy. We welcome that positive step, in the belief that multilateralism is the most viable option for achieving a world free from the danger of nuclear weapons.

Namibia believes in the effectiveness of collective action under the auspices of the United Nations to resolve conflicts by peaceful means and to address the challenges facing the world. My delegation is optimistic that together we can successfully work for the common good of all humanity. Let us join hands to achieve our common objective of building a better world for present and future generations.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Namibia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Hifikepunye Pohamba, President of the Republic of Namibia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Bharrat Jagdeo, President of the Republic of Guyana

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Guyana.

Mr. Bharrat Jagdeo, President of the Republic of Guyana, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Bharrat Jagdeo, President of the Republic of Guyana, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Jagdeo: I bring to all delegates at this sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly the warm greetings of my Government and people.

The United Nations was founded out of the ashes of war and violence. Its noble ambitions, grounded in the timeless values of peace, equality and justice, seek to create a better world for this and future generations. But if those values are to mean anything, the United Nations must not be merely about a statement of aspiration. Instead, we must strive until the United Nations provides the framework where the timeless values I speak of can be given life through meaningful and practical responses to the contemporary challenges our peoples face.

The challenges are many, but this week has drawn three of them into particularly sharp focus: first, our global efforts to halve poverty and achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015; secondly, a global financial crisis that threatens to undo much of the progress we have made in lifting people out of poverty; and thirdly, a climate crisis that carries the risk of planet-wide disruption that endangers entire nations and the continuation of much of what we take for granted today.

Those challenges are all a function of the dominant characteristic of the modern world: our interconnectedness as a global community. And we will meet the challenges only if we adopt an interconnected response. The notion that we can protect our national and global interests through inward-looking national responses is no longer valid. Instead, it is in all of our interests for the United Nations to provide the platform that facilitates global, interconnected responses.

But I think we have some way to go if that platform is to be created. When it comes to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), although progress has been made, we have not connected the rhetorical support for their achievement to actual delivery. When it comes to the financial crisis, we have not connected the benefits of globally open financial systems to measures that protect against the risks that those systems create. And when it comes to the climate crisis, we have not connected the scientific evidence to global policy responses that mitigate the worst extremes of climate change.

We could choose to continue in this vein, but it is clear where that would lead us. Or we could choose to ask ourselves if we are prepared to be held accountable for carrying our share of the responsibility.

My country recognizes that we must deliver our part. We are on track to meet most of the Millennium Development Goals, especially in the areas of education and health. We are doing all we can to weather the financial crisis with the minimum suffering for our people. And we recognize that we must do more than just complain about climate change. We have created our Low Carbon Development Strategy, which sets out a long-term path to protect our 16-million-hectare rainforest and move our entire economy onto a low carbon trajectory.

But there are times when it feels as though the international system sets out to put hurdles on the path to overcoming the challenges. Inconsistencies and a lack of coherence among aid, trade and climate policies in the developed world, to name just three areas, often create difficulties for developing countries who seek to make progress.

The United Nations can help to change those realities, and provide the framework for global responses that match the ambition of the institution. But at the core of that framework must be an enhanced understanding of the concept of accountability.

As countries like mine fully embrace our need to be accountable for the actions we take to support a global response to the MDGs, financial instability and climate change, so too developed countries must recognize their responsibilities and the need to take a holistic approach to their dealings with the rest of the world. Aid flows are appreciated and valuable, but they sometimes pale into insignificance when those countries that promote how their aid is helping the achievement of, for example, the Millennium Development Goals are also pursuing unjust, narrow-minded trade or climate policies.

I therefore call on the United Nations to establish a set of global accountability indicators with which we can transparently monitor whether the members of the international community are pursuing policies that, in a holistic sense, help them discharge their global responsibilities, not just through the provision of aid but also through the avoidance of unfair trade and climate policies. Through the Millennium Development Goals, we have started to develop some of the indicators we need. As we enhance them further, I believe we will see that better accountability, properly understood, can help us rise to the challenges we face.

I would like to highlight the centrality of the need to protect and preserve our environment. While each of the issues I have mentioned is a global one requiring a global response, the environmental challenges we face mock those who think we still live in a world where global collective action is somehow a matter of choice.

The destruction of a natural habitat anywhere in the world removes life forms that could have been the bedrock of future medical advances for citizens everywhere. A ton of carbon emitted in Africa or Asia threatens the citizens of the smallest village in North America. When those who seek to represent their citizens deny that that is true, or fail to understand its consequences, they threaten their own national interests and the wealth and security of their nation.

Therefore, failure to appreciate the need for an interconnected, global response to climate change and loss of biodiversity is not just an abdication of responsibility to some intangible global good or to people on the other side of the world. It is a very real, measurable threat to citizens in every village, hamlet and city in the world. History will not judge kindly those who were too blinkered or ignorant to realize that. So a step change in our efforts to avoid catastrophic climate change and protect biodiversity is needed.

When we met here last year, many hoped that the United Nations would facilitate agreement on global action to stabilize our planet's climate at the meeting of most of the world's leaders in Copenhagen in December. Not only did the global community fail to accomplish that, we are now in real danger of suffering from a catastrophic drift in ambition, where we no

longer even try to connect the scientific evidence on climate change with the necessary global action to avert it.

This drift in ambition must be stopped. It is a consequence of choices we make; it is not predetermined. So we must rededicate ourselves to crafting a shared response to shared climate threats. Most progressive countries now realize this, and are committed to temperature rises of a maximum of 2° degrees C or lower. They feel that this will require global economic growth powered by efficient and clean energy, new green industries, and a new, less carbon-intensive approach to forestry and agriculture.

But despite knowing this, the international community continues to fail to put in place the measures that will enable the economic transformation that we claim we want. This is in large part due to the absence of a global agreement that puts a price on high-carbon activity and rewards low-carbon innovation. We need this to change. To that end, Guyana continues to hold that the international community needs a legally binding global climate treaty that would first facilitate the emission cuts needed to stabilize the planet's climate, and then enable us to move on from seeing climate change purely in terms of its costs, while also allowing us to see how it can catalyse a once-in-a-lifetime global economic transformation that can benefit people everywhere. This cannot happen without deep, binding emission cuts in today's developed world, which could stimulate the financial flows that can address mitigation and adaptation across the developing world.

We recognize that such a global treaty may not be achievable this year, but we are not powerless to act now. The international community can do three things even in the absence of a treaty, and we can achieve breakthroughs in each when we meet in Cancún.

First, we can hold the developed countries accountable for the commitments they have made to the immediate short-term ramping-up of financing for climate action in the developing world. The existing commitments of a total of $30 billion by 2012 and $100 billion per year by 2020 can be agreed to in Cancún. Secondly, we can solve the vexed issue of an effective financial transfer mechanism to ensure that the funds flow both to adaptation and mitigation actions. Thirdly, we should look at ramping up meaningful sectoral responses that work in the short term. Specifically, in Guyana we believe that action on deforestation and forest degradation is one of the efforts that can be made quickly and with maximum impact. I want to emphasize that none of this is about asking the developed world to provide us with aid. Instead, it is about ensuring that the capital for addressing climate change is allocated where it can have the biggest impact.

In addressing these matters, I want to raise a sensitive subject: the Copenhagen Accord, which was the only tangible outcome of last year's climate Summit. I know that many countries here today associated themselves with the Accord reluctantly, and that some did not associate themselves with it at all. But I believe that reluctant or no association with the Copenhagen Accord, and strong support for some of its provisions, are not mutually exclusive. Even countries that did not associate themselves with the Accord should hold the developed world accountable for its commitments.

We have long said in Guyana that if the international community is prepared to be held accountable, we will not be found lacking. Three years ago, we said that notwithstanding the immense climate challenges in our country — in 2005 floods caused damage equivalent to 60 per cent of our gross domestic product — we were prepared to do our bit. We have determined that, as a country more than 80 per cent of whose territory is rainforest, we can make a disproportionate contribution to solving climate change. So we have looked at the contribution we can make in two ways: first, by creating a financial mechanism whereby we can put our entire rainforest under protection; and secondly, by using the resources we receive for the climate services we provide from our protected forest to reorient our economy on a low-carbon trajectory.

As a consequence, after one of the most comprehensive national consultations on climate change anywhere in the world, we have started to implement our low-carbon development strategy. We have identified how we can cumulatively save forest-based emissions of 1.5 gigatons by 2020. We have a deal in place with Norway on reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, and because of this we are in the process of creating a climate finance fund that will amount to between $300 million and $500 million between this year and 2015. We have also identified how we can use this climate financing to

invest in education and health care; to catalyse private finance to move virtually our entire economy to clean energy; to open up non-forested land for new economic activities; to invest in climate adaptation needs and to support our indigenous people in the economic and social transformation of their communities. We therefore hope that we are demonstrating the value of action on the three interlinked financing commitments I spoke of, and I hope that we are starting to show how interconnected global responses can deliver globally valuable results.

The United Nations is, despite its many limitations, our best hope for the advancement of humanity. Its universality allows the Organization to play a central and catalytic role in balancing the differing interests of Member States and in generating consensus on the issues that divide us. We must therefore commit fully to the principles and purposes of its Charter and to the improvement of its structure. On behalf of my country and people, I wish to assure the Assembly of our full support for the Organization and for strengthening its capacity to better fulfil the many mandates entrusted to it.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Guyana for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Bharrat Jagdeo, President of the Republic of Guyana, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Ahmed Abdallah Sambi, President of the Union of the Comoros

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Union of the Comoros.

Mr. Ahmed Abdallah Sambi, President of the Union of the Comoros, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Ahmed Abdallah Sambi, President of the Union of the Comoros, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Sambi (*spoke in French*): This year I should like to devote most of my statement once again to the important matter of the Comorian island of Mayotte. This has been a dispute between us and France for more than three decades. It is our hope that there will be greater understanding and more active solidarity on this matter on the part of this Assembly.

It is my belief that the future of my country, the Union of the Comoros, depends on peace and stability. But there can be no lasting stability in my country without a final solution to this problem. Accordingly, this year we have once again requested that an item on the Comorian island of Mayotte be included on the agenda of the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly.

I also take this opportunity to express the deep gratitude of the Comorian people for the valuable and unwavering support of the African Union, the League of Arab States and the Organization of the Islamic Conference on this issue.

I would like to begin by recalling that, pursuant to recommendations of the United Nations, the highest French authorities have themselves affirmed that the Comoros should accede to independence within inviolable borders. Thus, former French President Mr. Valéry Giscard d'Estaing declared, inter alia, that the Comoros are and always have been an entity and that it is natural that they have a common destiny.

I also deem it vital and timely to recall today certain resolutions of our Organization confirming the legitimacy of the Comorian claim to the island of Mayotte. These include resolution 1514 (XV), of 14 December 1960, on the granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples, which guarantees the national unity and territorial integrity of such countries on regaining their sovereignty. Resolution 3291 (XXIX), of 13 December 1974, reaffirms the integrity and unity of the Comoro Archipelago. In addition, resolution 3385 (XXX), of 12 November 1975, adopted a few months after the independence of the Comoros, affirms the admission of the Comoro Archipelago, composed of the islands of Mayotte, Anjouan, Mohéli and Grande-Comore, to the United Nations.

Lastly, the historic resolution 31/4, of 21 October 1976, underscores the right of the Comoros and the duties of France with regard to that independent country. Allow me to read out the provisions of that resolution that is of paramount importance to my country and which will remain forever etched in the memory of my Comorian compatriots.

"Considering that the occupation by France of the Comorian island of Mayotte constitutes a flagrant encroachment on the national unity of the Comorian State, a Member of the United Nations,

"Considering that such an attitude on the part of France constitutes a violation of the principles of the relevant resolutions of the United Nations, in particular of General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) of 14 December 1960 concerning the granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples, which guarantees the national unity and territorial integrity of such countries,

"1. Condemns and considers null and void the referendums of 8 February and 11 April 1976 organized in the Comorian island of Mayotte by the Government of France, and rejects:

"(a) Any other form of referendum or consultation which may hereafter be organized on Comorian territory in Mayotte by France;

"(b) Any foreign legislation purporting to legalize any French colonial presence on Comorian territory in Mayotte;

"2. Strongly condemns the presence of France in Mayotte, which constitutes a violation of the national unity, territorial integrity and sovereignty of the independent Republic of the Comoros;" (*resolution 31/4, third and fourth preambular paragraphs and paras. 1 and 2*).

France refuses to comply with all those relevant resolutions adopted by the General Assembly relating to the Comorian island of Mayotte and continues to violate the principle of the inviolability of colonial borders. It must be recalled that the principle of the inviolability of borders became a rule of customary international law, codified under paragraph 6 of resolution 1514 (XV), which stipulates that:

"Any attempt aimed at the partial or total disruption of the national unity and the territorial integrity of a country is incompatible with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations."

That same resolution recalls in its paragraph 7 that:

"All States shall observe faithfully and strictly the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the present Declaration on the basis of equality, non-interference in the internal affairs of all States, and respect for the sovereign rights of all peoples and their territorial integrity."

International jurisprudence fully recognizes that principle of the indivisibility of colonial entities. In the judgment handed down on 11 September 1992 in a dispute between Honduras and El Salvador, the International Court of Justice in The Hague declared that the principle of the inviolability of colonial borders is a retroactive principle that changes administrative boundaries originally designed for other purposes into international borders.

For many years, my country has called the international community to witness and has made known its readiness to seek a fair and just solution bilaterally. The response to our position was crushing. France not only took unilateral steps in 1994 to hinder the free circulation of persons by introducing a visa for all Comorians wishing to visit Mayotte, part of Comorian territory, but also, in 2000, it began the process of making the island a department, which is illegal under international law.

I wish to stress that the imposition of a visa requirement in 1994 had truly tragic human consequences. The small slice of the sea of approximately 70 kilometres separating Anjouan from the sister island of Mayotte has now become the largest maritime cemetery in the world. To date, nearly 7,000 people have been killed.

Moreover, while we had agreed to establish a high-level working group to relaunch the dialogue in order to consider together equitable and just solutions, on 29 May 2009 France organized another referendum aimed at changing the status of the island of Mayotte into an overseas department.

We are surprised that, despite all the good will demonstrated by the Comorian side — and in particular the innovative proposal on Mayotte known as "one country, two systems" or two administrations, which I myself introduced at an earlier session of this Assembly — there has been no positive response from France to that outstretched hand. The dual system would be a compromise that would finally ensure respect for international law, while enabling France to continue to legally administer the Comorian island of Mayotte during a period to be mutually agreed. It would also enable our Mahorais brothers and sisters,

whom I love dearly, to preserve their social status and standard of living, and the three other islands to finally take up the many challenges of development in peace and stability.

But France wants to know nothing about this compromise. Faced with such an attitude, we find ourselves obliged to request our dear Organization to require France to respect and comply with international law, implement the various relevant United Nations resolutions on the Comorian island of Mayotte, and to reconsider its position on our offer, which clearly represents a huge sacrifice on the part of my country, which in fact is within its rights.

What is at stake is the future of the Comoros, a small sovereign country Member of the United Nations. Also at stake is the honour of France, a great country whose ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity so strongly and profoundly inspired the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the principles underpinning our Charter. Ultimately, what is at stake is the honour of our Organization, whose very credibility would be sorely challenged should international law and legality continue to be disregarded and the territorial integrity of the Comoros continue to be violated.

The United Nations is the guarantor of respect for international law. It is duty-bound to require that its Members' legislation complies fully with the relevant resolutions. I can only endorse the statement of the President of the General Assembly, His Excellency Mr. Joseph Deiss, who said at the opening of this session that the United Nations is the guarantor of global governance and enjoys a global legitimacy.

I cannot end my statement without reiterating that the Comoros supports the efforts of the international community, and more specifically the personal efforts of His Excellency President Barack Hussein Obama, to establish a just and lasting peace in the Middle East enabling the Palestinian people to live freely and safely in an independent State and to enjoy fully all their legitimate rights.

My country also pays tribute to efforts to bring an end to the fratricidal conflicts that are ripping apart the Sudan, Afghanistan, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes region.

We also reiterate our strong support for the territorial integrity of the brotherly Kingdom of Morocco and our full backing for the Moroccan autonomy proposal as a definitive political compromise solution to the regional dispute over the Moroccan Sahara.

We also reiterate our unwavering support for the legitimate demands of the People's Republic of China for the return of Taiwan to China's fold.

It is through peace, stability and security and respect for international law that our nations will be able to attain the development goals they have set themselves to help our peoples. I therefore have full trust that our Organization shall continue to make these ideals its main focus.

(*spoke in Arabic*)

We must, as soon as possible, implement the agreements and resolutions that we have agreed in order to find peaceful and definitive solutions to all outstanding issues, because any delay in or suspension of our search for such solutions would create additional, similar issues and crises in other countries and spark the flames of extremism and terrorism throughout the world. We hope that we shall find solutions that will lead to the happiness and well-being of all our peoples.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Union of the Comoros for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Ahmed Abdallah Sambi, President of the Union of the Comoros, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Carlos Mauricio Funes Cartagena, President of the Republic of El Salvador

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of El Salvador.

Mr. Carlos Mauricio Funes Cartagena, President of the Republic of El Salvador, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Carlos Mauricio Funes Cartagena, President of the Republic of El Salvador, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Funes Cartagena (*spoke in Spanish*): It is an honour and a great responsibility to address the

Assembly today. It is a responsibility because we need to make the right analysis of the serious problems we face and, in my particular case, of the difficult reality in my country. El Salvador is one of many nations on this planet beset by the problems of poverty, backwardness and, above all, injustice. The more a leader is weighed down by the tragedy of his people, the greater the responsibility, as we know well.

When the Assembly reviews the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the struggle against poverty in the world, and we look at the reality in Central America, we can say that the efforts made have not yet yielded the expected results. It is not easy for me to be so blunt in my assessment, but that is the reality and the international community must be sensitive to the plight of the vast majority of the world's population. For many years now, the agenda of the United Nations and other multilateral forums has included the struggle against poverty. The hoped-for improvements, however, cannot be discerned. As far as social justice is concerned, far from achieving the desired progress, the gap between rich and poor countries, and between the rich and poor within individual countries, has widened. Injustice has prevailed over our good intentions. That is the truth.

The recent massacre in the Mexican state of Tamaulipas of 72 migrants, of whom 14 have been identified as Salvadorans — and we continue to try to identify others — reveals the magnitude of the tragedy that, while centred on Mexico and Central America, affects the whole world. Those 72 murdered desperate young men and women, who lost their lives trying to find a future in the United States or Canada, are an expression of the tragedy in the region, as well as a metaphor for global injustice. This tragedy was not the result of a plane crash or climate change. It was the result, essentially, of three factors that point to the lack of positive results in the fight against poverty and injustice.

I am referring first to the lack of opportunities, exclusion, backwardness and widespread injustice that affect Central American societies and account for the mass emigration of their young people. The second is that of migration, a consequence of the first. The third is violence, crime and the shadow business of organized crime, which exploits the breeding ground of poverty and the transit of dispossessed migrants for its illicit purposes.

El Salvador has 6 million inhabitants in its territory and 3 million more living elsewhere, mainly in the United States. Migration has grown year by year in the wake of Governments' lack of response to the aforementioned problems. Our migrants — indeed, the migrants of the entire world — leave their civil rights behind when they leave their country and arrive in new lands that do not recognize those rights. As experts on migration have said, the migrant is a pariah, a human being without rights. For the more than 200 million migrants around the world, mostly young people, human and social rights, such as those embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, are not guaranteed. Another reality in our region is the very high incidence of violence against women, which also calls for our special attention.

We note the close relationship between poverty, injustice and migration. Furthermore, another, closely related factor in our region is the strong presence of organized crime and the extremely high incidence of violence and criminality. We can say without exaggeration that the map of poverty and injustice is the same as the map of migration; of the traffic in drugs, humans and weapons; civic insecurity; money-laundering and crime on a major scale.

I mentioned the lack of positive results in fighting poverty and injustice on a global scale, especially in Central America. I will now offer an example of the failure of policies implemented in my country over the past decade. According to a report of the United Nations Development Programme, the wealthiest segment of the population in El Salvador received 23 per cent of the State's social spending. The lowest segment — the poor and marginal population — received only 18 per cent of that social spending. The State actually promoted and expanded injustice and contributed to greater poverty. It is obvious that the neoliberal policies implemented in recent decades have run counter to the desire of the international community to reduce poverty, as expressed in the Millennium Development Goals.

Let us therefore keep in mind the wise words of Albert Einstein, who said that an insane person is he who does the same thing over and over again and expects different results. I am not speaking of my country alone. I believe that everyone has to undertake profound changes in the way social policies are designed in order not to perpetuate failure. It would be naïve, for example, to think that a coercive, repressive

State that invests more and more in its security forces or that mobilizes its army to support the police to combat crime — as I have ordered done in El Salvador, given the rise in crime that I inherited upon assuming office — can in and of itself resolve the problem of insecurity. We would be making a historic mistake if we did not address the root causes of violence and crime. The indolent State that has prevailed in recent times must be transformed into a social State that wages as its chief battle the reduction of poverty and injustice.

In this regard, I would like to lay out some thoughts based on that reality. First, the righteous battle against organized crime and on behalf of the human rights of migrants does not fall exclusively to Mexico and Central America. Here, I would like to say that we must not leave it to Mexico or to Central America alone. Our region is not the main consumer of drugs. Our countries are not the major recipients of the uninterrupted flow of laundered drug money, the product of the failure of stricter controls. It is not only our people who will be hurt if the drug cartels continue to grow stronger and to endanger our countries' survival. This battle is not irrelevant to anyone. It would be a mistake to believe that Mexico and Central America can defeat crime alone. The territory of criminal violence today is the border between the United States and our small countries, but tomorrow it will be in the major cities of the developed world, the capitals of America, Europe, Africa and Asia. So let us not leave it to Mexico alone, and let us not leave it to Central America alone.

This is my appeal to the international community. The help our countries need is economic; it is intelligence; it is support for training and equipping our law-and-order forces to combat crime and control money-laundering. But we also need help with the new social and regional policies that the Central American Integration System has prepared, because those investments will address the causes of our tragedies.

For these reasons, I wish to bring two proposals to the General Assembly. First, we should establish, under the auspices of the United Nations, a Central American commission to investigate organized crime. The establishment of such a body would be based on the good experience of the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala known as CICIG, which was established with the support of the United Nations, the United States, Canada and Spain. Such a commission would no doubt contribute to strengthening institutions. We must recognize that State organizations have been infiltrated by organized crime and that all means must be made available to recover them and to wage the war against crime.

My proposal is based on an implicit acknowledgement of the obvious truth that organized crime does not recognize borders or respect States. Our response must therefore also transcend these boundaries; our response must be integration. Until the establishment of such a commission, my country shall work along these lines and has launched dialogue and action with neighbouring countries with a view to coordinating policies to prevent and punish crime.

My second proposal concerns the establishment of an international alliance to support the priorities of regional integration, which are the fight against poverty and inequality and the creation of opportunities that will allow our populations to stay in their communities of origin.

Central Americans understand this, and are willing to give battle to poverty, exclusion, and organized crime. To that end, we have started joint work by relaunching our integration organization, the Central American Integration System. Central Americans are striving to create strong, democratic and just societies. In the specific case of El Salvador, my Government is moving forward with the building of a social State that reformulates social policy, taking into account the failure of past mechanisms that I mentioned earlier.

Gangs have become veritable criminal organizations coordinated with organized crime. We shall not overcome this reality with mere assistance policies or improvements in the standards of living. This phenomenon is found among young people who, from earliest childhood and adolescence, join gangs, and is so widespread that gangs have become a complex subculture. Our response must be equally so.

Within the framework of a social State, we must deepen democracy and strengthen republican institutions. We know that corruption is one of the worst enemies of the democratic system; therefore, working for transparency has become a fundamental aspect of our national and regional strategies.

Throughout Central America, this struggle is a matter not only of ethics, but also of democratic

survival. In other words, we must oppose the potential emergence of a drug State by building strongly democratic and transparent States. It has been proven that the more corruption there is, the less economic development there is. Corruption poisons public policies, especially those that assist the poor; it reduces citizens' trust in their system and makes markets inefficient.

My Government has created a specialized body to fight corruption. The Under Secretariat of Transparency and Anti-Corruption is the first body in America to submit itself to the in situ control by the Inter-American Program of Cooperation to Fight Corruption of the Organization of American States, and has been commended as such. According to the Government of the United States, El Salvador is also the Central American country with the best performance in fighting organized crime and drug trafficking. Thus, it is not on the high-risk map which that Government has just published. Without transparent institutions, strong and independent institutions and without a true vocation to fighting organized crime, it will not be possible to meet the great challenges before us.

We are waging a war. It is a new war unlike those of the past. We are not waging it against another nation or standing army. We are facing a powerful, sophisticated, diffuse enemy that has blended in with our society, and we must fight it with new weapons, creativity, intelligence, and the cooperation of our societies and the global community. Only thus will our efforts be commensurate with the circumstances. Only thus will we be able to meet today's challenges. Only thus will we provide sound responses to the needs of the majority of our peoples, who await opportunities to believe once again in democracy, institutions and politics.

Once again, I appeal to the conscience and sensibility of the international community. In conclusion, I wish to do so by quoting President John F. Kennedy's 1961 inaugural speech, which reflects what I have tried to convey today. He said that "if a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich".

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of El Salvador for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Carlos Mauricio Funes Cartagena, President of the Republic of El Salvador, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Toomas Hendrik Ilves, President of the Republic of Estonia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Estonia.

Mr. Toomas Hendrik Ilves, President of the Republic of Estonia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Toomas Hendrik Ilves, President of the Republic of Estonia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Ilves: I am pleased to address the General Assembly. This year, I shall focus on three pressing global matters: the progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), promoting peace and security, and humanitarian affairs.

During the first decade of this millennium, the MDGs have triggered a level of global commitment and wide-ranging partnership that the world has never seen before. Along the way, there have been setbacks, of course. One thing, however, is certain — achieving the MDGs is an attainable reality with concrete targets and deadlines.

We have set a clear goal, but we must keep in mind that we shall reach our objective only if we share the weight of responsibility and all of us pull in the same direction. The political will expressed by a majority of stakeholders at the recent MDG summit and in its outcome document (resolution 65/1) needs to be implemented promptly, in accordance with the agreed action agenda. Only five years, after all, remain. Estonia is ready to provide continuous contributions to the success of our common endeavour.

Estonia contributes towards the achievement of the MDGs through focused development cooperation policy and respective activities in our main partner countries, one of which is Afghanistan. Alongside with providing security through the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), we are carrying out long-term health care and education projects in Helmand province. We also offer our best practices in

establishing standards of good governance, including the creation of an electronic voting system for the newly elected Parliament.

Estonia supports the transition process, including the gradual transfer of security responsibilities to the Afghan authorities. This process should be term-based and irreversible, and carried out according to the agreement reached at the ISAF meeting in Tallinn last April. Ownership of the process on the part of the Afghan Government is crucial in taking forward the pledge it made at the Kabul Conference with regard to strengthening the electoral framework. This, along with the endorsed reform agenda, demonstrates the Afghans' desire to develop their nation.

For my country, Estonia, the development of information and communications technology has been a crucial engine of economic development and modernization throughout the past 20 years. This is why our experts advise Governments on information and communications technology solutions in many parts of the world. In cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme and the Open Society Institute, we have established a special academy to assist Governments in developing countries with advice and training in electronic governance and the use of information and communications technology in public services. I am convinced that the more successful we are in reducing the digital divide, the more accelerated and more sustainable overall economic progress will be.

I commend United Nations efforts in paving the way towards a more efficient operational system, especially the long-awaited outcome of the four-year system-wide coherence negotiations. As the implications of gender inequality affect all the Millennium Development Goals, the consensus agreement on establishing the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) will serve as an extra boost for meeting those Goals.

Estonia contributes to the achievement of the Millennium Goals through the respective United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, and we pledge our support to UN Women as well.

Ever since the United Nations Charter was signed, 65 years ago, the United Nations has stood for global peace and security. The United Nations peacekeeping budget has increased more than 15-fold since 1991. It is difficult to imagine the situation in major crisis areas, such as the Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, without the active, multifaceted engagement of the United Nations. With its 15 military and 12 political operations, however, the United Nations peacekeeping force is clearly stretched thin. We need further reforms in order to enhance the effectiveness of peacekeeping operations and to encourage regional actors to assume a stronger role. Estonia contributes to the United Nations peacekeeping budget at a voluntarily enhanced rate. We have done this for 10 years now and will continue to do so.

The credibility of the United Nations in the promotion of peace and security depends on the commitment of all Member States. We all share equally the responsibility to apply the principles enshrined in the Charter, including the duty to refrain from any threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State.

Estonia reiterates its firm support for the sovereignty, territorial integrity, security and stability of Georgia, on the basis of full adherence to international law. For the peaceful resolution of that drawn-out conflict, it is necessary to continue the Geneva talks in their initial format. Humanitarian issues, in particular ensuring the safe and dignified return of refugees and internally displaced persons, and the question of increased access to the conflict zone, especially for humanitarian workers and international observers, need to be seriously addressed now. Furthermore, the free movement of people living within the internationally recognized borders of Georgia must be ensured.

Without justice, efforts to ensure sustainable peace might easily be wiped out. I would like, therefore, to emphasize the importance of the adoption by consensus of a package of amendments on the crime of aggression by the Review Conference of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, held in June 2010. Estonia strongly supports an international criminal justice system in which an independent and effective International Criminal Court plays a central role.

It is also of crucial importance to support the activities of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia during its final years of existence. Estonia is doing its share with respect to the enforcement of sentences.

Success in confronting the security challenges of the twenty-first century, including cyberthreats, depends on close cooperation among all States and international and regional organizations. Estonia urges broad cross-border and cross-sector capacity-building in protecting critical information infrastructure, the importance of which was highlighted in the report of the high-level panel of experts on information and communication technology (A/55/75). The necessity of closer cooperation among States, between the private sector and civil society, is critical, since during a cyber attack all traditional security measures may be rendered useless. I can assure you that all-encompassing preparedness will pay off when a real crisis strikes.

Estonia remains actively engaged in areas where our contribution can make a difference, particularly in humanitarian affairs and human rights issues. In this context, I would like to draw attention to the tenth anniversary of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security, which must be a stepping stone towards further action at the United Nations, regional and national levels. Establishing operational guidelines for the protection of women and girls, strengthening accountability mechanisms and enhancing women's participation in peace negotiations and post-conflict peacebuilding should be part of these efforts. To this end, Estonia is finalizing a national action plan to enhance our activities.

Mr. Al-Jarman (United Arab Emirates), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Estonia is a strong and principled advocate of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of expression. Estonia supports the strengthening of the Human Rights Council and its capacity to promote and protect human rights around the world. We aspire to join the Human Rights Council in 2012.

Estonia has also continuously increased its contribution to United Nations humanitarian activities, both through work in the field and financially. The United Nations coordination capability was crucial most recently in Pakistan and at the beginning of the year in Haiti, where it saved lives, and where Estonian logistics experts have been supporting United Nations activities on the ground for more than six months now. Our experience has made clear the need for more combined efforts in securing the link between relief efforts and development work.

Estonia is concerned about increasingly frequent violations of humanitarian principles in conflict zones. Alas, humanitarian emblems and flags no longer provide the shield of protection they used to. We must step up our efforts and press for increased security for humanitarian aid workers. After all, it is the responsibility of Governments to ensure the safety and security of humanitarian personnel working on their territory.

The effectiveness of humanitarian aid and upholding good humanitarian principles are other concerns of ours. Advocating these principles was one of the activities Estonia pursued during our recent co-chairmanship of the Good Humanitarian Donorship initiative.

Finally, I would like to underline one simple truth. The United Nations, like any other organization, is only as strong and effective as the political will and commitment of its members. Big or small, we all bear responsibility. As a member of the European Union, Estonia firmly believes that the Treaty of Lisbon fundamentally enhances the ability of the Union to be a significant global actor, securing peace, stability and prosperity for all. With our shared commitment, I expect the vital and prominent role of the United Nations in the global arena to be further reinforced.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Estonia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Toomas Hendrik Ilves, President of the Republic of Estonia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Benigno Simeon C. Aquino III, President of the Republic of the Philippines

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of the Philippines.

Mr. Benigno Simeon C. Aquino III, President of the Republic of the Philippines, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Benigno Simeon C. Aquino III, President of the Republic of the Philippines, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Aquino: Allow me to convey the greetings of the Filipino people to the President of the General Assembly and the representatives gathered here for the sixty-fifth session of the Assembiy.

The United Nations was founded on the belief that in collective action lies collective security. It is when nations reach across their borders that the immense problems of our age begin to be manageable. In a world that has become increasingly globalized, the challenges that we face have become globalized as well. Climate change; pandemics; terrorism and weapons of mass destruction; transnational organized crime such as human trafficking and the illicit drug trade; the continuing vulnerability of migrants, women, persons with disabilities and the poor; and the challenges posed by increasingly interconnected economies — all call for a further strengthening of international cooperation.

All of us here, representing our respective nations, are stewards entrusted with the well-being of our respective peoples. We are also required to be responsible and responsive members of the community of nations. Clearly, we are already aware that the problem of one poses a problem for all. Any solution, then, depends on us recognizing that each one of our nations exists, not in a vacuum, but rather in an increasingly interdependent global milieu.

The central revelation here is that for humanity to progress, all nations must progress as one. The quest for universal human dignity should not be defined by geographical, racial or cultural boundaries, nor should it be set back by our desires to move our own nations forward. Global progress means equitable progress. The industrialized nations of the world can look with pride on the living standards their peoples enjoy. But, as one of my distinguished predecessors once said: "Those who have less in life should have more in law".

This basic principle of social justice is also the most basic humanitarian challenge of our times. The wealth of nations must become an instrument to move the world further along the straight and righteous path of compassion and communal responsibility. The message is clear: there are those who need help, and acting with compassion towards those who need help is a response that is both humane and necessary. This idea has been trumpeted for decades, and yet combating inequality remains one of the greatest challenges of our times. The chasm between the powerful and the powerless, the haves and the have-nots remains to be bridged. The past century has demonstrated, in terms so stark that it inspired the creation of this Organization, that when the mighty clash, those who have less end up trampled. This is true where conflict exists and true where markets exist; true in our nation and true in an international context.

The concept of vulnerability and inequality is all too clear in the global effort to address climate change. Those who stand to lose much, if not everything, from the effects of man-induced climatic conditions are those who did little to cause it. There is an enormous need to ensure, as a matter of justice, that countries, particularly those that are vulnerable, are assisted in their adaptation and disaster risk-reduction efforts and are provided the necessary resources to build climate-resilient communities. This should go hand in hand with ambitious commitments by major economies to significantly reduce global greenhouse gas emissions.

Many of you may say that you have already given mightily of your resources. But surely we do not need flood and famine to remind us that there is so much more that must be given, because there are so many more who deserve the hope of a better life.

The most immediate focus of cooperation demanded of us today is to collectively ensure that the eight Millennium Development Goals will be achieved by all in the remaining five years. That is a daunting task, and we are all aware that national resolve has to be complemented by bilateral, regional and multilateral cooperation.

Rising to the challenges of our era requires, within each of our countries, a strengthened regulatory system. This does not mean a cumbersome, intrusive Government, but rather a Government that allows private enterprise to thrive, while ensuring that it remains cognizant of its social responsibilities and empowers it, in turn, to fulfil those responsibilities. Many Governments are tackling this challenge, including the Government of the Philippines. Our Administration pledges to channel any gains we reap

from public-private partnerships into social services, like those in health, education and poverty alleviation.

Across boundaries, the battle against inequality requires a balanced approach from those in authority. We should be conscious of our responsibilities to our own people and of our duties to regions and the globe. Already we are witnessing a rethinking of traditional paradigms, a shifting of our focus towards ensuring that the global system does not leave anyone behind.

And while my nation continues to benefit from the compassion of those who are able to help, this does not mean that we or our friends in the developing world will be entirely dependent on the largesse of the developed world. We will not be passive players in our quest for development. My nation remains active in the Group of 77 and in other efforts aimed at enhancing South-South cooperation and articulating and promoting our collective economic interests.

This is what our people put us in power for. This is what the world expects of us as leaders — to be exemplars of what it is to be compassionate human beings and vanguards of hope for our common humanity. For is not this hope also the hope that unites us as human beings? It is the same hope that allows us to break down walls of mistrust, which may take the form of intolerance, fear or violence. It is the same hope that leads us to gather in this Hall as our predecessors did. It is the same hope that will give our generation of leaders the strength to elevate this global Assembly to a place where, collectively, the nations of the world are able to find ways to make a better life possible for all.

There have been many times in our history when my people have shown that, united, nothing is impossible. We call it "people power". It is my earnest hope and in the greatest interests of humanity that we harness the energies of dialogue, solidarity and communal responsibility so that a global "people power" towards equitable progress may be achieved.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly I would like to thank the President of the Republic of the Philippines for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Benigno Simeon C. Aquino III, President of the Republic of the Philippines, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Filip Vujanović, President of Montenegro

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of Montenegro.

Mr. Filip Vujanović, President of Montenegro, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Filip Vujanović, President of Montenegro, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Vujanović: It is a great pleasure for me to address this distinctive forum, which continues to bring together the most responsible people, committed to achieving and protecting the common good, peace and stability. This meeting also confirms the irreplaceable role of the United Nations in the international community and the respect in which it is held.

Following the valuable contribution made by the previous President of the General Assembly, Mr. Ali Abdussalam Treki, I would like to welcome the election of Joseph Deiss as the President of the Assembly at its sixty-fifth session, and to wish him every success. I also pay special tribute to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his consistent reaffirmation of the United Nations as an indispensable player in solving crucial issues that have long been on the international agenda, which has become more complex and demanding than ever.

As the youngest Member of the United Nations, Montenegro has proved itself a reliable partner in the United Nations mission to strive for a world of peace, security and prosperity for everyone. At the same time, thanks to United Nations support, Montenegro has significantly enhanced its standing in international organizations, while ensuring the quality of reforms in its own State and society. The current improvement in global finances, albeit slight, shows that, in addition to the crucial role of the largest and richest countries, especially the Group of Eight and the Group of 20, the United Nations is essential to actions undertaken for the stabilization of the global economy.

Montenegro supports the pragmatic reform of the United Nations. We also welcome the recent adoption of General Assembly resolution 64/289 on system-wide

coherence and the timely initiative of Assembly President Joseph Deiss to make the theme of this year's general debate the reaffirmation of the central role of the United Nations in global governance.

The protection of international peace and stability continues to be a focus of the General Assembly agenda. Convinced that no progress or stability can be ensured without peace and security, Montenegro supports and contributes to the efforts of the United Nations in this regard, affirming the basic principles of the United Nations Charter relating to the peaceful settlement of disputes through diplomatic channels.

Mindful of our foreign policy priorities of European and Euro-Atlantic integration, when considering and taking any concrete action concerning conflict zones in the framework of the United Nations, Montenegro harmonizes its policy with European Union foreign policy, taking due account of specific national interests. We are best able to contribute by continuing to play a constructive role as a stabilizing factor in the international community, especially in the Western Balkans and South-East Europe.

We strongly support United Nations efforts in implementation of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, and we welcome the idea of more intensive activities in the preparation and drafting of a United Nations convention on international terrorism. Montenegro is of the opinion that only through the coordinated efforts of the international community can global terrorism be defeated. We support the various United Nations documents on the fight against corruption, organized crime, illicit traffic in narcotic drugs and trafficking in human beings.

Montenegro has fully committed itself to implementing all international legal instruments fostering disarmament and arms control. We support any new constructive initiative aimed at strengthening international cooperation for the reduction and elimination of all types of arms and lethal weapons.

Montenegro deeply appreciates the importance and role of the United Nations peacekeeping mission as a unique instrument for the creation and maintenance of peace and peacebuilding in conflict zones. Decades-long experience in peacekeeping operations confirms the validity of this concept and the strategic policy of the United Nations. Peacekeeping operations have been successful in reducing the negative effects of conflicts and preventing their further escalation and disruption of regional and international peace, stability and security.

Although a small country — and the youngest Member of the United Nations — Montenegro fully assumes its responsibility to contribute to the maintenance of peace and stability, as is demonstrated by our continuously enhanced participation. We will make further contributions in line with international efforts and in keeping with our tradition, the Principality of Montenegro having, as a sovereign State, participated in the international peacekeeping mission back in 1897.

Montenegro believes in the crucial importance of the Millennium Declaration (resolution 55/2) and of achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). We are sure that this aim will be furthered by the exchange of views and recommendations at the recent High-level Plenary Meeting on the Millennium Development Goals, and Montenegro supports the implementation of all relevant strategies, programmes and initiatives of the United Nations in this regard. The crisis has also brought home to us the necessity of further realizing the sustainable development concept, which requires a balance between economic and social development and environmental protection. To this end, we remain committed to the resolutions of the United Nations and the Commission on Sustainable Development, which have also been fully reflected in the Millennium Declaration of 2000.

Montenegro supports the ongoing efforts and attention of the United Nations to the current challenges in Africa. To this end, the fulfilment of the MDGs and the implementation of all United Nations documents, including the Millennium summit decisions, is of crucial importance.

As a country engaged in the process of European integration, Montenegro supports partnership relationships between the European Union and Africa, as well as efforts undertaken to solve development challenges and eradicate poverty on the African continent.

In the context of climate change and its adverse effects, we are fully committed to finding a common response in accordance with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. We are deeply committed to this end, in view of the effects of the natural disasters that occurred in the past year causing heavy loss of life and enormous material

damage, in particular the earthquake in Haiti and the floods in Pakistan. Therefore, a global response and action is required, and not only at the humanitarian level. Efforts aimed at reducing the effects of natural disasters and at the rebuilding and further development of affected regions and countries are also necessary.

In order to act responsibly with respect to the complex issue of climate change, we have established, together with neighbouring countries and countries from the region, a regional forum in Montenegro which deals with the prevention of climate change and related challenges at the national and regional levels.

Montenegro is fully dedicated to the promotion and universal protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms for everyone. We strongly support the activities of the Human Rights Council and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, including their more intensive functional interaction with the General Assembly and relevant Committees.

We believe in the potential and capacities of the United Nations, especially when strengthened by the active participation and robust contributions of each Member State, to find adequate responses and take actions aimed at resolving the ever-increasing global challenges. As an institution dedicated to individuals and humankind collectively, which continues to affirm peace and prosperity, the United Nations remains of irreplaceable global value, and Montenegro is proud to belong to it.

I assure the Assembly that Montenegro will continue to give its strong support to strengthening and upholding the United Nations, so that the latter may improve its efficiency, responsibility and readiness to meet the needs of each Member State.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of Montenegro for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Filip Vujanović, President of Montenegro, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, President of the Republic of Uganda

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Uganda.

Mr. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, President of the Republic of Uganda, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, President of the Republic of Uganda, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Museveni: I did not attend the High-level Meeting on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), as I was not yet in New York. Nevertheless, I would like to inform the General Assembly that Uganda will definitely achieve the following MDGs: Goal 1, on the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger; Goal 2, on achieving universal primary education; Goal 3, on the empowerment of women and the promotion of gender equality; Goal 7, on ensuring environmental sustainability; and Goal 8, on creating a global partnership for development.

It is only in the areas of maternal and child health that we may not achieve by 2015 the targets set. However, in Uganda, we have developed a national road map to accelerate the reduction of maternal and child mortality and morbidity, which is a comprehensive strategy that clearly spells out our national priorities in this area. In this strategy, we have given priority to four key intervention types, namely effective antenatal care, skilled attendance at birth, emergency care for women who experience complications in childbirth and family planning. We have also given priority to creating infrastructure that supports and strengthens the health-care system.

Regarding MDG 6, Uganda has made tremendous efforts with respect to HIV/AIDS prevention and control. We are now renewing our efforts to deal with the challenges of the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

It is noteworthy that, overall, Uganda was recently ranked among the middle performing countries according to the United Nations Development Programme's Human Development Index. However, in Uganda, we have never believed in donor-anchored responses to the MDGs as a sustainable solution. Responses to the MDGs should be anchored in the growth and transformation of the economies of the target countries. I am therefore glad that the cloud of Afro-pessimism is dispersing. The opinions of the Afro-pessimists are being consigned to

where they have always belonged — to the dung-heap of history.

Some groups in the West, where Afro-pessimism abounded in the past, have now started talking of the African lions, no doubt equating in their minds the performance of the African economies with the Asian tigers of yesteryear. Groups like the McKinsey Global Institute are beginning to group the African economies — which collectively recorded a growth rate of 4.9 per cent of gross domestic product in the gloomy years of the recent global depression, compared with the mere 2 per cent of gross domestic product that the countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development recorded in the same period — into four categories. Those categories are: diversified economies, oil-exporting economies, economies in transition and pre-transition economies. Uganda was put in the group of transition economies.

Although the McKinsey group needs to improve their statistical base and some of their insights, they are among the first Western groups to recognize what we — who have been working on African issues for a long time, on goals we set out to achieve in the years after independence — long knew was possible: to make Africa move from Third World to First World, in the words of Lee Kuan Yew, the former Prime Minister of Singapore.

Although there are 53 economies of Africa being managed by the respective national authorities, reform trends and ideas are sometimes shared. The McKinsey group estimates that the consumption level of Africa, which stood at $860 billion in 2008, will grow to $1.4 trillion by 2020.

What one needs to add is the fact that those economies have become roaring lions, underdeveloped infrastructure notwithstanding. What will happen when the infrastructure bottlenecks are resolved? That is the question that one should ask oneself. What will happen when there is cheap and abundant electricity, cheap road transport and cheap rail transport? Those areas had been neglected for a long time. The study by the McKinsey Global Institute revealed that there are now 316 million new mobile phone subscribers since the year 2000 in Africa, more than the entire population of the United States. In other words, there are now more mobile phones in Africa than there are American people living in the United States.

There are 600 million hectares of uncultivated arable land in Africa. If our partners could concentrate on assisting infrastructure development, Africa's transition would be that much faster. All the same, a country like Uganda is transitioning. Aid in relevant sectors is welcome, but even without aid we are moving forward.

I know the theme of the general debate is "Reaffirming the central role of the United Nations in global governance". In my short address I have not talked directly about this. I have instead spoken about Africa's economic reawakening as a roaring lion. Was I irrelevant? I do not think so. It is those strong building blocks that will strengthen the United Nations.

Africa has been a weak link in the chain of the struggle for improved governance in the world over the last 50 years. Improved economic performance in Africa is, therefore, good for the continent and also good for the rest of the world.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Uganda for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, President of the Republic of Uganda, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Choummaly Sayasone, President of the Lao People's Democratic Republic

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

Mr. Choummaly Sayasone, President of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Choummaly Sayasone, President of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Sayasone (*spoke in Lao; interpretation provided by the delegation*): At the outset, I would like to extend my sincere congratulations to His Excellency Mr. Joseph Deiss on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session. I am fully confident that with his vast experience he will be able

to lead this session to great success. May I also commend His Excellency Mr. Ali Abdulssalam Treki, President of the Assembly at its sixty-fourth session, for his effective leadership. I would also like to applaud Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his leadership in fulfilling effectively the various duties and tasks mandated to address the current emerging challenges and constraints.

The global state of affairs today has undergone rapid change and become more complex, offering both opportunities and challenges. Global and regional peace and security are threatened by conflicts and armed confrontation. Severe and unprecedented natural disasters have become a regular phenomenon that we have to live with. The tragedies caused by natural catastrophes, such as in Haiti, China, Pakistan and elsewhere, have intensified and are coupled with the economic crisis that we are already facing.

No one can deny that those calamities and challenges are mostly the result of our own human action. National challenges have gone beyond national boundaries and become matters of international concern, matters that a single country or even a group of countries cannot overcome alone. Therefore it is the full responsibility of the international community as a whole to tackle them.

Against that backdrop, it is time for us to fully realize all the promises and commitments that we have made. The United Nations reform process, which has been pending through past decades, should continue in a more concrete manner with a view to ensuring mutual benefits for all Member States. The reform should also seek to ensure a relevant and effective role for the United Nations as the only universal body addressing global challenges. To achieve those objectives, it is critical that all Member States enhance cooperation in a sincere and trustworthy manner and avoid taking advantage of one another.

Peace and stability are still threatened by weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear weapons. The results of the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons held in May this year did not by any means meet our expectations in addressing the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and making our world free of nuclear weapons. Consensus is far from being reached due to manifest suspicion and distrust. Therefore it is time to build trust and confidence in order to create an enabling international environment for a nuclear-free world.

The use and proliferation of weapons of all forms undoubtedly have a long-term impact on the lives of people and impede national socio-economic development efforts. The Lao People's Democratic Republic is still badly suffering the consequences of wars that ended several decades ago.

The legacies of the Indochina war include a huge amount of remnants and unexploded ordnance, which have continued to kill and injure innocent people. That is a major obstacle to the possibility of an ordinary daily life for the Lao people. Over 30 per cent of Lao soil is heavily contaminated by unexploded ordnance, and that is a major constraint and challenge in the country's efforts to achieve its national socio-economic objectives and to attain the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The Convention on Cluster Munitions, which entered into force on 1 August 2010, is a result of the close cooperation and shared commitment of the international community to put an end to the serious impact of cluster bombs and to thus free people from that danger. As the country most affected by unexploded ordnance, especially cluster munitions, it is a great source of pride for the Lao People's Democratic Republic to have played an active part in the Oslo process, which led to the adoption of this Convention. We will continue to cooperate closely with the international community to ensure that it is fully implemented.

In that context, it is a great honour for the Lao People's Democratic Republic to host the First Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions in Vientiane from 8 to 12 November 2010. That event that will be an important milestone for the Oslo process and provide an opportunity for the international community to reaffirm its strong determination to address the challenges caused by cluster munitions. The First Meeting of States Parties will offer us an excellent occasion to chart a clear vision and adopt appropriate mechanisms to ensure the effective implementation of the Convention. On that note, once again I would like to extend my Government's cordial invitation to all United Nations Member States, international organizations and non-governmental organizations to participate and play

an active part in the discussions and ensure the successful outcome of the Meeting.

Regional peace and security remain critical for ensuring global peace. We share a common concern over the situation in the Middle East, which has caused great suffering and immense loss of lives and property in the region, especially for the Palestinian people. It is my fervent hope that the resumption of peace talks between Israel and Palestine, with the participation of the United States, will lead to a solution and the realization of the vision of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security and within internationally recognized borders, as stipulated in the relevant resolutions of the Security Council.

The Republic of Cuba is a sovereign and politically stable State that has enjoyed peace and security for several decades. Nevertheless, for over half of a century, the people of Cuba have been affected by the economic, trade and financial embargo imposed on them by the United States. Indeed, such an embargo constitutes a clear violation of the United Nations Charter and international law. Therefore, in order to respond to the legitimate interests of the two countries and peoples — Cuba and the United States — the embargo should now be lifted.

The cooperation among South-East Asian countries has been steadily expanding. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has set the objective for 2015 of building our community with three pillars, namely, the ASEAN Political-Security Community, the ASEAN Economic Community and ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community. To attain that objective, ASEAN has laid an important socio-economic foundation, including the Free Trade Area among ASEAN countries as well as Free Trade Areas between ASEAN and China, ASEAN and the Republic of Korea, ASEAN and Japan, and ASEAN and Australia-New Zealand.

Furthermore, the ASEAN Master Plan on connectivity will be adopted at the Seventeenth ASEAN Summit, to be held in Hanoi in October 2010 to support the ASEAN Free Trade Area. The successful cooperation within ASEAN has contributed to the effort to narrow the development gap within ASEAN as well as between ASEAN and other countries. It also helps the ASEAN countries attain the MDGs.

While the world is facing a financial and economic crisis, coupled with various natural calamities, the most impacted are the least developed countries (LDCs), the poor and the vulnerable in the society. The international community's main objective in attaining the MDGs is to ensure that the lives of the poor and disadvantaged are improved and that the number of LDCs is reduced. That would demonstrate that we can achieve the MDGs.

In that context, the ten-year review of the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action for LDCs, to be held in 2011, is crucial. We will assess whether the seven commitments that we endorsed together in 2001 have been fulfilled. In that connection, I commend the Secretary-General for setting up a group of eminent persons on least developed countries to advise on support for LDCs.

The year 2010 is of great significance for the Lao People's Democratic Republic. Our country has completed the implementation of the Sixth Five Year Socio-Economic Development Plan and has already started the preparation for the Seventh Plan, for 2011-2015. Over the past years, our socio-economic development has been steadily progressing. The economy has grown at an average rate of seven per cent annually, poverty has continuously declined, and the living standard of the multi-ethnic Lao people has gradually improved. All that success has been due to the right policy and the timely measures undertaken by the Government. The decisive factor in creating an enabling environment for socio-economic development in the Lao People's Democratic Republic is political stability and social order that our nation has enjoyed over the past three decades.

Nevertheless, to a certain extent, the Lao People's Democratic Republic remains challenged by the global financial and economic crisis, and that is contributing to the decline of our economic growth. Against that backdrop, the Government has adopted immediate measures that have helped to alleviate the impact of the crisis.

However, due to the uncertainty of the state of today's global economy, like other developing countries, the Lao People's Democratic Republic is still vulnerable, and thus requires the assistance and support of the international community in addressing the impact of the crisis over the long term. Such assistance will help the country overcome any future problem resulting from the current crisis, enable us to

achieve the MDGs and, ultimately, leave the status of least developed country by 2020.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic reiterates once again its firm commitment and willingness to work closely with the international community to build a peaceful world under a just and more democratic new order, based on cooperation with all countries, in tackling the various global challenges facing us. I am convinced that only through genuine partnership will we be able to ensure that the world is secure, peaceful and prosperous.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Lao People's Democratic Republic for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Choummaly Sayasone, President of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Marcus Stephen, President of the Republic of Nauru

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Nauru.

Mr. Marcus Stephen, President of the Republic of Nauru, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Marcus Stephen, President of the Republic of Nauru, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Stephen: I would like to offer my heartfelt congratulations to the President of the Assembly on his assumption of the presidency of this body at its sixty-fifth session. Also, allow me to commend his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Ali Abdussalam Treki, for his capable leadership during the sixty-fourth session.

This week is vitally important for my island nation of Nauru and for small island developing States generally. This week we will complete the high-level reviews of the Millennium Development Goals and the Mauritius Strategy, two programmes that are central to the sustainable development prospects of my country.

We gather here on this occasion to reaffirm the central role of the United Nations in global governance. However, the centrality of the United Nations system must derive from its ability to help bring about positive outcomes for all of its membership. In that regard, the United Nations report card is mixed.

While this body and others have brought attention to the unique and particular vulnerabilities of small island developing States, they have not always succeeded in delivering concrete benefits. There is a proliferation of global action plans but a paucity of action. For this reason, Nauru has relied more on its domestic institutions and bilateral partners than on multilateral governance solutions.

Nauru turned a corner in 2005 when it adopted its National Sustainable Development Strategy, commonly known to us as our NSDS. Under that plan we have made significant progress across most sectors. Our financial system is now more transparent and Government more accountable. Most importantly, we have restored some measures of security for our citizens: expanded public health programmes, new and refurbished schools, updated curriculum and more teachers. Power is more reliable and its usage more efficient. Regular air and maritime travel has been restored, and we have seen major improvements in our communications system.

Most of the gains in the past five years have been the result of our own efforts, largely supported by bilateral development partners targeting our national plans. However, our journey is far from over. Our NSDS lays out a clear path forward to aid independence based on our national circumstances and capacity. Its medium- and long-term milestones are fully consistent with, and complementary to, the Millennium Development Goals and Mauritius Strategy programmes. It is my hope that the United Nations can play a more significant role in this next phase of our development.

Five years after our initial request, I am pleased that the United Nations has opened its joint presence office in Nauru. It is my hope that that will enable United Nations agencies to be more familiar with, and responsive to, our unique development challenges.

The future of all my people depends on an effective United Nations system, but none more so than the future of our youth. Not long ago, my country

suffered a devastating economic crisis. It was followed by the explosion in global fuel and food prices and then by the global economic downturn, which many of us are still grappling with today. Those crises were exacerbated by virtue of Nauru being a small and isolated island in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. As a country, we will overcome. However, some impacts will be felt longer than others.

Perhaps the cruellest legacy of our economic crisis is the impact it had on the youth who grew up during that trying time. Advantages that my generation took for granted — a good education, basic health care and abundant job opportunities — were simply not available for many of our youth during a critical period in their lives. In the absence of such advantages, substance abuse, illiteracy, delinquency and lifestyle-related illnesses became commonplace. As we progress as a nation, we must ensure that we do not leave one segment of our community behind. Our collective future will not be secure unless we invest in the community and business leaders of tomorrow.

It is for this reason that Nauru appreciates the importance of the International Year of Youth, which commenced in August 2010. This United Nations tradition began 25 years ago when this body recognized the profoundly important role that youth should have in shaping a new international economic order based on equity and justice.

My Government has made investing in our youth a top priority. Nauru is on track to reach our Millennium Development Goal of universal primary education by 2015. We have been successful despite the significant shortage of quality Nauruan teachers.

Of equal importance to the development of our primary and secondary education systems is the need to develop technical and vocational training, recognizing and certifying skills and job-oriented training. Only by continued investment in human resource development will the next generation of Nauruans be prepared for the challenges of the twenty-first century.

Our health sector, too, has made gains in curative services and preventative health programmes. However, around 75 per cent of people in the Pacific suffer from non-communicable diseases. That is not sustainable. Investments in public health must be accompanied by investments in improving food security. It will be difficult to change that alarming statistic for the better unless my people have a reliable supply of affordable and nutritious food. Health education must also receive more emphasis in our educational programmes.

Education and public health are obviously two areas that are fundamental for the well-being of our youth, but alone they are not enough. Our youth must also be given the opportunity to use their skills in productive ways, lest those skills wither on the vine. For that we need a growing economy, and for a growing economy we must look to our development partners and multilateral institutions for assistance.

Aid should be deployed so as to build a foundation for sustainable development in all economic sectors, including basic infrastructure, in which to date there has been less progress than in health and education. The re-establishment of banking and financial services continues to elude us despite all our urgent efforts to obtain assistance. Nation-building and youth development must run parallel to each other if either is to succeed. Investments in basic infrastructure will enable us to expand our economic base, increase exports and also reduce the costs of imports.

The United Nations system must also be enhanced in order to avoid the mistakes of the past. That is why we are joining others in calling for the creation of a formal small island developing States (SIDS) category within the United Nations system.

The international community has consistently recognized the unique vulnerabilities of the small island developing States, yet that recognition has not been translated into effective action. The preparatory work for the five-year review of the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States found that the vulnerabilities of SIDS remain and that progress towards sustainable development is far below expectations. It is clear that business as usual is not working and that a new approach is long overdue.

The creation of a new SIDS category would make the United Nations more responsive to the particular needs of small islands. This new category should be accompanied by structural support mechanisms in the areas of development assistance, financial support and trade. Only by dealing with the vulnerabilities of SIDS can there be any realistic prospect of SIDS attaining sustainable economic growth.

The most important test of our commitment to our youth is the state of the world that we leave to them. We have long been aware of the environmental crises currently facing our oceans and our climate, but we have done precious little to address them. Without immediate and aggressive international action on both fronts, we will bequeath to our children a world that is far poorer than the one we ourselves inhabited.

Nauru takes these threats very seriously, which is why my country, along with other island countries in the Pacific, recently strengthened the Nauru Agreement. That multilateral agreement on oceans governance is a major step in strengthening an effective regime for managing and protecting regional tuna stocks. The preservation of that resource is essential to our region's food security and to our economic development. Regrettably, the sustainability of the tuna stocks and other marine resources that we rely on is threatened by actions beyond our control. Illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and overfishing by large fishing nations is rife in the Pacific, and we lack sufficient resources to respond to that criminal activity. One of the pillars of our economic future is literally being stolen from our children.

With regard to climate change, my island and many others like it face an existential threat far beyond our capacity to adapt. Rising sea levels and extreme weather may one day render my home uninhabitable. But an island can die long before it has disappeared beneath the sea. All that is required is to deprive its youth of hope. What incentive will they have to invest in their home if it will not be there for when they are older? We have an opportunity to change course later this year at the United Nations Climate Change Conference to be held in Cancún. We must act as if our children's future depended on the decisions we make.

Climate change is a global issue and demands the full participation of all. We therefore call on the immediate inclusion of Taiwan in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) process. We must also recognize that climate change poses many threats — security threats — that are not addressed under the UNFCCC process. That is why the Pacific small island developing States introduced in the General Assembly a resolution on climate change and its possible security implications (resolution 63/281). The Security Council, as the primary body of the United Nations entrusted with preserving international peace and security, must also play its role.

Lastly, we must ensure that the views and perspectives of all nations and peoples are incorporated into the decision-making of the United Nations system and its specialized agencies. In that context, Nauru strongly supports Taiwan's campaign for meaningful participation in the International Civil Aviation Organization.

I would like to conclude by thanking our development partners for their long-standing commitment to Nauru, particularly our major partners — Australia, Taiwan, the Russia Federation, New Zealand, the European Union and Japan — as well as our many other active partners, including Cuba, Italy, India, the Republic of Korea and Israel. We further recognize the international and regional organizations that have continued to stand by our side during a difficult period in our history, and I look forward to our continuing cooperation.

I would also like to commend the United Nations for beginning a difficult process of reflection and reform so as to be able to more effectively respond to the global challenges we all face. Nauru looks forward to participating in this important discussion so that the United Nations can continue to play a central role in global governance.

May God bless the Republic of Nauru and may God bless the United Nations.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Nauru for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Marcus Stephen, President of Republic of Nauru, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Valdis Zatlers, President of the Republic of Latvia

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Latvia.

Mr. Valdis Zatlers, President of the Republic of Latvia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Valdis Zatlers, President of the Republic of Latvia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Zatlers: Allow me at the outset to congratulate Mr. Deiss on assuming the post of President of the General Assembly at the current session. I pledge him Latvia's full support.

Sixty-five years ago, the United Nations was created on the ashes of the bloodiest war in the history of mankind as an international forum where all nations meet as equals, willing to address international challenges and to prevent the scourge of war. Since then it has become the most broadly representative body of nations focused on promoting security, peace and prosperity all over the world.

This year also marks the twentieth anniversary of Latvia's freedom, regained after 50 years of Soviet occupation, oppression and injustice. Latvia's story shows that the values enshrined in the Charter are universal and, with the people's persistence and common vision, can come alive, even if it takes decades. It also shows that it is possible to overcome even the deepest of divisions. It shows that, while honouring our history, we can extend a hand of cooperation and look into the future with hope.

There are many global issues that need our real attention and require urgent action. Just a few days ago we renewed our commitment to development at the High-level Plenary Meeting on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). While important improvements have been made globally, progress towards achieving the MDGs by 2015 has not been sufficient. If we are serious about achieving the Millennium Development Goals, we need to show commitment and action.

A new consciousness is emerging from the awareness of the negative impact of climate change. Climate change is a fact. We are witnessing a rising number of storms, excessive rainfall and atypical temperatures, which lead to flooding, forest fires and crop failures. All those disasters have an immense material cost and claim people's lives, and therefore they should be treated as a serious security threat. The response must be twofold. We have to adapt to the changes already in place and to those we will face in the coming decades. And most importantly, we have to work on preventive measures, such as the reduction of emissions.

We have a road ahead of us on the issue of climate change, and every country has to contribute if our actions on it are to be successful. Within the framework of the Copenhagen Accord, Latvia, among other European Union member States, is providing assistance that, along with financial contributions from other key players, helps developing countries fight climate change. We must make the next step in Cancún. We have to agree on global action to address climate change. The future of the next generation is at stake.

While we are working for long-term goals, we also have to address immediate crises wherever they occur. The international community, with the United Nations in the leading role, has been addressing humanitarian needs following the devastating flooding in Pakistan, which has affected more than 14 million people. This year we also witnessed a terrible earthquake in Haiti. Latvia, despite its economic challenges, was able to respond to those international emergency humanitarian needs, both through the United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund and through additional pledges of €150,000 for Haiti's recovery. We will continue to help countries affected by such tragic disasters.

Latvia has always supported the strengthening of the United Nations as the only truly global international organization. However, in a time of globalization and rapid development, the need for reform is an inevitable reality. We must therefore continuously seek maximum effectiveness and efficiency in the work of the United Nations in order to deliver results worthy of this Organization. A Security Council that reflects the realities of the twenty-first century would be a significant step towards a more effective United Nations. We sincerely hope for a faster pace for the reform process.

We commend the work of the United Nations in the promotion of gender equality and welcome the creation of a unified gender entity. I would like to congratulate the new head of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, the former Chilean President Mrs. Michelle Bachelet, on her appointment and to wish her every success in that highly important post.

This fall we also mark the tenth anniversary of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security. We see it as an opportunity to review implementation of the resolution with a view to identifying best practices and challenges, particularly regarding equal participation of women in decision-making and the eradication of all types of gender-based violence, especially in conflict situations.

At this session we have a very important task ahead of us: reviewing the work of the Human Rights Council. The Council has already shown itself capable of addressing many human rights situations and of advancing human rights. I particularly wish to highlight the independent work of the special procedures and the establishment of the universal periodic review mechanism. However, improvements are still necessary. I am confident that with goodwill, and with participation and input from all of us, the review process will lead to a strengthened institution with increased credibility and greater impact on the improvement of human rights.

Latvia has always placed the promotion of human rights among its top priorities. We have therefore put forward our candidacy for the Human Rights Council for the year 2014.

The role of the United Nations in maintaining international peace and security is irreplaceable. We must continue to work with all the means at our disposal to create a more stable world. Latvia appreciates the positive momentum that was created at the Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference earlier this year. Stabilizing and strengthening a nuclear non-proliferation regime is a shared responsibility of all United Nations Members. As a member of the international community, Latvia expresses the hope that every diplomatic opportunity will be used to find a comprehensive long-term solution to the Iranian and North Korean nuclear issues.

The New START treaty between the United States and Russian Federation sets a powerful and remarkable example of real steps to reduce the threat of strategic arms and to engage other Powers in fulfilling the goals of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Latvia firmly supports the nuclear security discussion initiated by President Obama. Promising signs on the international agenda have positively influenced European security and fostered the debate on conventional regimes in Europe. An ambitious road map is before us, and together we should all move forward to strengthen security around the world.

Stability and security in a number of regions remain on the international agenda. In the Middle East, the international community must encourage the parties to move towards real compromises leading to a comprehensive settlement of the conflict. Common efforts of the international community, including the Quartet, and the unity of Arab States are decisive to ensure continuation of the peace process with a very clear final aim of establishing an independent, democratic and viable Palestinian State living side by side in peace with the State of Israel.

We welcome the launch of direct negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority and commend all involved partners for their efforts. Sustainable and durable solutions for Gaza, Palestinian reconciliation, and extension of the settlement moratorium are crucial for the Palestinian State-building process. We sincerely hope that the talks will continue in a constructive manner and be supplemented by negotiations on the Israel-Syria and Israel-Lebanon tracks towards comprehensive peace and stability in the Middle East.

A week ago the people of Afghanistan voted for their new parliament. The elections showed that the Afghanis are determined to build a peaceful and prosperous country that is at peace with its neighbours. We commend the work done by the Independent Electoral Commission. The elections were conducted in a difficult security and political environment. It is of the highest importance that the Government of Afghanistan corrects the irregularities caused by the harsh environment.

The international community plays a substantial role in coordinating civilian efforts in Afghanistan. The work of the Secretary-General's Special Representative must be commended. The recently released Mid Year Report 2010 Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict is worrisome and shows how much work remains to be done to improve the situation.

To be successful in Afghanistan, one should not forget the regional aspect of the issue. Stability in Central Asia is an important factor for success in Afghanistan.

We are satisfied to see that the Kabul process is under way and that the Government of Afghanistan is resolved to act in order to regain the trust of the Afghan people and to align the support of the international community behind the goals of national development. A well-coordinated effort is necessary to follow up the Kabul commitments so that in 2014 the Government of Afghanistan will be able to take full responsibility for the governance of the country. Latvia is therefore putting more emphasis on training Afghan security forces, both army and police. In June, Latvia carried out a training project for Afghan police officers in the field of criminal investigation.

Another important task is to foster Afghanistan's economic and social development. Regional cooperation can be very useful in that effort, especially with regard to energy and transport infrastructure. Latvia envisions multiple transport corridors connecting Afghanistan to the neighbouring region, as well as to Europe.

I would like to refer to the European Union as an important partner of the United Nations. The United Nations and the European Union share the same fundamental values — freedom, democracy, rule of law, human rights, equality and tolerance. It is our duty to work together to ensure that those values are not just words but something to be enjoyed daily by everybody.

The European Union has been changed through the Lisbon Treaty. We hope that that change will give the European Union a clearer voice in relations with our partners, including the United Nations. I hope that agreement will soon be reached to ensure the European Union's effective participation in the work of the General Assembly.

Finally, I would like to touch on the economic slowdown in the global economy during the past couple of years. Latvia was one of the countries hit hardest by the crisis. Now Latvia's economy is showing signs of recovery. We have seen positive trends in macroeconomic indicators since the beginning of the year. We are on the way up.

The reason for our recovery is the tough fiscal adjustment that Latvia has demonstrated since 2008. I am certain that other countries will need to go through considerable budgetary consolidation soon. Our experience shows that it is possible, but only with the full understanding and support of the population. Latvia has carried out large-scale reforms, and we are ready to share our experience. That is one of the reasons why Latvia has put forward its candidature in this year's elections to the Economic and Social Council.

Prudence will be a key element to prevent future economic crises, but not the only one. Global financial governance will be another such element. Latvia commends the role and leadership shown by the Group of Twenty (G-20) countries. Financial governance should be global, and we highly value the initiatives put forward towards that end by the G-20, international financial institutions and other forums.

The world is entering the second decade of the twenty-first century, and there are challenges to security, peace and prosperity. They can be met only by a common effort and the unity of mankind. I wish us all the wisdom and courage to maintain the higher interest in the common good. Latvia looks forward to a fruitful sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Latvia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Valdis Zatlers, President of the Republic of Latvia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Gjorge Ivanov, President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Mr. Gjorge Ivanov, President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Gjorge Ivanov, President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Ivanov (*spoke in Macedonian; English text provided by the delegation*): It is a privilege and a great honour for me today to address this unique forum where great and small, powerful and less powerful nations speak with one voice; a forum we undoubtedly expect to result in dialogue and leadership in order to

deal with the challenges to peace and security, hunger and development, human rights and climate change. Success will be possible only by overcoming individual interests. I am convinced that today more than ever, each of us individually and all of us together have reasons to turn our words into actions.

Let me first congratulate Mr. Joseph Deiss on his election as the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session and assure him of my delegation's readiness to cooperate during his term. I also congratulate the former President, Mr. Treki, on successfully presiding over the Assembly at its sixty-fourth session. At the same time I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the engagement and the efforts made by the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, to strengthen the role of our Organization.

At the outset, I would like to say a few words on the consequences of the global financial and economic crisis, and I will refer in particular to the role of the United Nations in this context.

The global economic and financial crisis threatened to reverse the progress made in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and efforts to attain peace in all regions. I think that all we Member States and the United Nations system in general successfully dealt with it. Timely, joint and adequate solutions were found to many of the problems. Processes were initiated to mitigate the effects of the crisis and to face possible future crises. Actions were taken to help the most affected, according to the agreed action plans and with appropriate support and cooperation, often resulting in successful outcomes. Let us not forget that economic, financial and social security is a foundation on which sustainable development, national and global security and prosperity rest.

Five years remain before the deadline for the implementation and realization of the Millennium Development Goals. That objective is still before us — an objective we must not give up on achieving now, despite the decelerated pace of implementation. We are all aware of the high stakes and potential benefits. I welcome the outcome of the High-level Plenary Meeting on the Millennium Development Goals held last week, when we all pledged to strengthen our efforts to attain the ultimate goal.

The Republic of Macedonia, as before, remains strongly committed to achieving the Goals, as reflected at the national level in the Government's strategy for economic and sustainable development and in national legislation, which is adapted to the current obligations deriving from international treaties and agreements.

On the other hand, global climate change is both a serious threat to our planet and survival. Frequent natural disasters and humanitarian catastrophes have made it clear that nature reacts to the irresponsible attitude that humankind has adopted towards it. However, the struggle to preserve nature must not only be a matter of declarations; it must enjoy global leadership and be visible in every small town, every State, and the strict observance and development of national strategies. Successful formulas must be transformed into in a common global struggle to preserve our way of life, side by side with the needs of the planet.

The Republic of Macedonia stands ready to contribute adequately to the global efforts. Many initiatives have been undertaken. We are truly focused on the best possible weapons in this struggle: awareness-raising and education on and a culture of reducing the use of electricity by using alternative energy sources and reductions in harmful emissions. As a party to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change for over a decade, my country has worked actively to achieve the Convention's objectives.

Unfortunately, the world still does not live in the desired peace and prosperity. Unfortunately, every day we continue to witness disturbances to peace and security in certain regions in the world, both in old and frozen conflicts and in the emergence of new tensions in several regions in the world. If the fundamental institutional goal and essential objective of this Organization is to spare humanity from suffering, wars and conflicts, then we should ask ourselves whether our efforts have been sufficient to secure peace and prosperity. The answer is no, neither globally nor regionally.

The consequences of the global financial and economic crisis and the slow pace of implementation of the MDGs have had a serious impact on the essence of conflicts, often because of a lack of democratic processes and rule of law in certain areas. Only by promoting peace, human rights and the rule of law through dialogue and tolerance can we make the world a just and fair place to live in.

In the context of what I have just said, I welcome the relevance of this session's theme, which should help create effective responses to global crises and restore the role of the United Nations in global governance. The genuine vision of the founders of the United Nations should be restored. They have left us a legacy.

The Republic of Macedonia strongly supports the joint efforts to improve the overall coherence of the United Nations system. I believe that we all agree that it was and remains necessary to redefine the functioning of the United Nations system in order to respond to the demands and priorities of the Member States in the best and most effective manner possible. We should create a highly functional global governance organization that has no overlapping of mandates, but achieves maximal effect through an appropriate and transparent use of existing resources.

Since gaining independence, the Republic of Macedonia has been fully committed to substantial reforms in all areas aimed at promoting democracy and improving the standards of living of its citizens, based on historical traditions of respect for multiethnic coexistence, dialogue and mutual understanding.

Our achievements in this context have been validated and internationally recognized. Therefore, the Republic of Macedonia rightfully expects a date to be set to begin negotiations on its accession to the European Union (EU) and an invitation to join NATO. We have enforced the necessary reforms to join NATO, we have been an EU membership candidate country for five years, and last year we received a positive recommendation to start negotiations with the EU. Unfortunately, our citizens have not yet felt the full benefits of that. And yet, the reforms that brought us to the front doors of these organizations were not at all easy. In addition, my country is actively committed to regional cooperation and to building good-neighbourly relations. Macedonia accepts and promotes dialogue as the only mechanism for overcoming all outstanding issues in the region.

The Republic of Macedonia has directed all its available capacities and resources towards implementing our top strategic foreign policy goals: integration into the EU and NATO membership. I would like to remind the Assembly that, 15 years ago here in New York, the Interim Accord was signed with our southern neighbour, whereby Greece agreed not to obstruct my country's membership of and integration into international and regional organizations. Nevertheless, I must note that my country is still waiting at the doors of these two organizations due to the actions of our southern neighbour, which are contrary to the obligations under the 1995 Interim Accord.

The Republic of Macedonia is fully committed to the process of resolving its differences with Greece within the framework of the mechanism established by United Nations resolutions. Our name is at stake, as is our right to self-identification and human dignity. We have done our utmost to nurture close and friendly relations with our neighbour Greece and its people. A solution will be reached only if the United Nations Charter, the relevant resolutions and international law and its principles, on which the international order rests, are respected.

The Republic of Macedonia and its citizens deserve to enjoy the benefits of NATO membership and to start EU accession negotiations.

Yesterday, here at the United Nations, I had a meeting with the Greek Prime Minister, which sought to build a climate of mutual trust and understanding. I hope that, as two neighbouring countries that have lived and will live with one another, we will be able to find a mutually acceptable solution. It will be a big step not only for us but also towards fulfilling our common vision for the whole region.

I must say that I am encouraged by the situation in our region. The more intensive communication and cooperation efforts are, the better understanding and respect will be. By accepting dialogue as the only way to overcome inherited problems and open issues, we create a new climate. Proof of this was the second Balkan Leaders Forum, which was held here in New York City a couple of days ago. Slowly but surely, the Balkans is restoring its impaired dignity. The Balkans again aspires to become part of the European space, where European values, European criteria and European principles will be respected. The Balkans has been, is and will be Europe.

Let me conclude with the statement that the Republic of Macedonia believes in the United Nations and the postulates upon which it rests. I believe that the United Nations can maintain the stability of international order and relations and successfully meet current and future global challenges. The Republic of

Macedonia stands ready to further provide its constructive contribution to the implementation and realization of these goals.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Gjorge Ivanov, President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 8 (continued)

General debate

Address by Mr. Gilbert Fossoun Houngbo, Prime Minister of the Togolese Republic

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Togolese Republic.

Mr. Gilbert Fossoun Houngbo, Prime Minister of the Togolese Republic, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Gilbert Fossoun Houngbo, Prime Minister of the Togolese Republic, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Houngbo (Togo) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, allow me to extend my congratulations and those of the Togolese people to Mr. Joseph Deiss on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session and to wish him every success in the accomplishment of his great task. My delegation will spare no effort in working at his side towards the successful achievement of his mandate. Like him, we are firmly convinced that the values that lie at the heart of the United Nations remain very relevant today to successfully meeting the challenges facing humankind.

I also congratulate his predecessor for his invaluable efforts during his term of office to advance the agenda of the General Assembly in many diverse and different areas, in particular those of peace and security, human rights and the development of our nations.

I would like to renew my personal support and that of my country to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for the dynamism he has shown over the course of the past four years at the head of the United Nations. I also take this opportunity to congratulate him on the important report that he introduced to us yesterday on the work of the Organization (A/65/1).

The theme that the President of the General Assembly has proposed for the current session, "Reaffirming the central role of the United Nations in global governance", eloquently translates the aspirations of our States, particularly the developing countries. The theme implies that the United Nations must remain at the heart of multilateralism and that the institutions of our Organization must therefore be reconsidered, beginning with the long-awaited reform of the Security Council, in order to bring greater democracy and equity and, above all, to respond more effectively to the many challenges to our world.

In its own search for better governance and the well-being of its people, my country, Togo, has tirelessly and irreversibly continued its march towards greater democracy, freedom and justice in an environment of peace and stability. Seeking to turn the page once and for all on the dark years of our democratic deficit, the Head of State has established a new policy of openness. In August 2006, this commendable initiative led to the signing of the Comprehensive Political Agreement among the main political actors in Togo and to the establishment of a Government of national unity and the holding in October 2007 of legislative elections that were universally recognized as free and transparent and, for the first time, without violence. These elections, which established a pluralist National Assembly, are without a doubt the emblem of our democratic renaissance.

The Government has since initiated political and economic reforms leading to the adoption of a statute of the opposition and of a law on the financing of political parties; the consensus appointment of members of the National Independent Electoral Commission; and the creation of a security force for the presidential elections, the members of which are trained according to universally recognized standards and have maintained security throughout the electoral process in an exemplary fashion. All of these efforts naturally allowed Togo to hold, on 4 March 2010, a presidential election that was democratic, peaceful and widely praised by the international community.

I reiterate here the profound gratitude of the Government and people of Togo to all of our partners,

to regional and international institutions, and to the friendly countries that supported us throughout the electoral process, making it a success and a good example. Our gratitude goes to the United Nations for its many forms of support throughout the process of democratization and consolidation.

I would also encourage the United Nations to invest even more in preventive democracy by, inter alia, beginning to envision mechanisms that could lead all parties to accept the results of elections that are recognized as credible and transparent by the international community. That is a challenge we have to take up, particularly in our young democracies, and especially the African democracies, so that the post-electoral period is no longer a nightmare or a source of division among our peaceful populations.

Notwithstanding his outstanding victory, and faithful to his policy of reaching out to his opponents, President Faure Gnassingbé appealed to all persons of good will to take part in the building of the Togolese nation. It was in this vein that an historic political agreement was concluded in May between the presidential majority and the Union des Forces de Changement, the main opposition party in Togo, which, with seven ministerial posts, has for the first time joined a Government after 40 years of political fighting.

Moreover, the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission, which seeks to promote reconciliation among the Togolese people by shedding light on the political violence that took place in Togo between 1958 and 2005, is currently in the depositions phase. My country will work tirelessly to consolidate the achievements of democracy and peace, while devoting increasing efforts and energy to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in order to bring human and sustainable development to the entire population. Now that Togo has reconciled with itself, I have faith in our capacity to fully renew our relations with all of our bilateral and multilateral partners and to open up new horizons in the vast field of solidarity that is international cooperation.

Although there are some positive signs of the recovery of the world economy, it is no exaggeration to say that the path to stabilization and the suppression of the disturbing effects of the crisis is still long, perilous and uncertain.

The new problem of climate change has brought in its wake catastrophes linked to rainfall phenomena, such as floods, drought and landslides. Without a doubt, all of these phenomena will have a negative impact on global economic growth in general and, more specifically, a tragic effect on the least developed countries in particular. Despite this threat, we still hesitate to reach agreement, as was demonstrated recently by the Copenhagen Conference on innovative and proactive strategies to significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, to pursue discussions to adopt as soon as possible a schedule for concluding a new agreement to succeed the Kyoto Protocol. The time for speeches is over; the time to act is now.

The High-level Plenary Meeting that we have just held here on the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals revealed once again the intrinsic link between aid and development, on the one hand, and development and political will, on the other, at the national and international levels. The modest results my country has achieved with respect to the MDGs could have been better, and we would have been closer to attaining them within the deadlines set if we had not been deprived for far too many years of the precious help afforded by development aid.

The peaceful political climate being enjoyed by my country will also enable us to effectively pursue the improvement of the management of our public finances so that we are able to devote more domestic resources to achieving the MDGs. However, the efforts undertaken by poor countries to consolidate the bases of sustainable development will be a genuine success only if developed countries provide them with their various forms of assistance and if they honour their commitments. Let us not close our eyes to this fact. We need better aid in terms of quantity and quality.

Although the international community can welcome the fact that the number of armed conflicts in the world has fallen, we cannot forget that several peacekeeping operations of the United Nations are still under way. That is undeniable proof that we are still far from the ideal of international peace and security that the founding fathers of the United Nations envisaged. Civil wars and terrorism continue to plunge many families into mourning throughout the world. More than wars, terrorism today is the most murderous form of violence inflicted upon people because it attacks indiscriminately, killing children, men, women and the

elderly. The eradication of terrorism in all its forms is a long-term task and the responsibility above all of States and the international community acting in solidarity. They are obligated to find the best way to fight this phenomenon. In this regard, prevention, protection, prosecution and punishment, as well as international cooperation, must remain the main focus of State action.

While Member States struggle to find a definition of terrorism in order to better fight it, the scourge is affecting an increasing number of countries because of the support that terrorists receive, particularly from drug trafficking networks. In West Africa, all leaders have become aware of the threat posed by drug trafficking and are engaged in a fight to the death against the phenomenon. I call on wealthy countries to help fight drug trafficking in my subregion in order to prevent it from becoming an unstable zone of unrestrained violence.

The purposes and principles for which the United Nations Organization was created are noble, but 65 years after its birth the work that remains to be done is immense because the social situation of the inhabitants of the planet does not always follow the development that our world has achieved. Poverty and destitution are not mere words; they are oppressive realities experienced day by day. They lead to violence, instability, conflicts and other scourges that we, today, are not fighting successfully. Only international solidarity will allow us to overcome the evils of this world.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Togolese Republic for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Gilbert Fossoun Houngbo, Prime Minister of the Togolese Republic, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Emil Boc, Prime Minister of Romania

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of Romania.

Mr. Emil Boc, Prime Minister of Romania, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Emil Boc, Prime Minister of Romania, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Boc (Romania) (*spoke in French*): It is my honour to speak here and to participate for the first time in the Assembly's general debate. The moment is all the more significant for us because Romania is celebrating 55 years of membership in the United Nations. My country and its people have always been firm believers in the ideal of countries working together for peace, prosperity and a better life for humankind.

(*spoke in English*)

Nicolae Titulescu, one of the great Romanians of the twentieth century, once said that hardship creates the true brotherhood of nations. He said those words in September 1931, as President of the League of Nations, in a time of crisis. Today we are burdened again by immense challenges and have to live up to great responsibilities placed upon us by present and future generations. Communities all over the planet face mounting threats, which are often interrelated. Climate change exacerbates food and energy insecurity, health and population issues increase migration, while poverty puts pressure on regional security and stability.

At the same time, we are heartened to see an ever increasing commitment on the part of the world's nations to act collectively and to share vision and willpower to overcome difficulties.

Climate change must be our next mobilizing issue. We must not let differences and the enormous complexity of interests define our drive. Negotiations in Cancún and thereafter, building upon the Copenhagen Accord, must pave the way for the timely adoption of a comprehensive and legally binding post-Kyoto agreement. Romania, including in its capacity as Chair of the Commission for Sustainable Development, will provide its unrestrained support and attention to international efforts to alleviate our planet's environmental perils.

While climate change will hit us ever harder, a global recession has just battered us. The crisis revealed the flaws of our national and international financial and economic systems. It has become obvious that the world's financial system is no longer compatible with the realities of global competition, nor

can it handle the misuse of free market principles. Indeed, the system needs to be revised.

Sometimes, with sufficient resources, development can be achieved quickly. But development without good governance is less likely to be lasting. A country whose citizens do not enjoy equality and dignity can never be wealthy. From its own past Romania knows very well the negative impact that the lack of genuine democracy, human rights and freedom has on long-term development prospects. That is why we must never lose track of a milestone document — the Universal Declaration of Human Rights — adopted by this very Assembly, 62 years ago, in Paris. The principles, the values and the generous ideals enshrined in that Declaration must remain the underlying foundation of our governance efforts. Romania plays an active role in promoting those fundamental values in our part of Europe and wherever its experience can prove useful and needed.

One must not forget that democracy starts with a basic step: free and fair elections. Electoral processes can be improved, including in the most advanced countries. States must be ready to accept that improvements are sometimes needed and be able to listen to and understand the calls for change, from within our societies or from outside.

Out-of-country voting is a sensitive and challenging issue, including in my country. Romania works in cooperation with the United Nations Electoral Assistance Division, European institutions and the Community of Democracies to develop knowledge and codify best practices in the field of out-of-country voting. We hope that the results of a first seminar on this topic, hosted by Romania this summer, will be multiplied and shared by many countries and regions.

Conflict prevention and peacebuilding are priorities in today's world. Neither of them can be isolated from efforts to stabilize and reconstruct areas and societies affected by conflicts. To be successfully put into practice, that conceptual framework needs the complement of a consolidated United Nations operational instrument to which all Member States must contribute to the best of their ability. For this reason my country has taken a keen interest in, and offered substantial contributions to, civilian and military missions under the United Nations mandate and has started to develop dedicated capacities, of essentially civilian nature, in the area of stabilization and post-conflict reconstruction.

Just a couple of weeks ago, Bucharest hosted an international conference to officially open the Romanian Training Centre for Post-Conflict Reconstruction. The Centre will be open to international participation, and we hope to develop enhanced cooperation with the United Nations Office for Partnerships.

Today, Romania is honoured and proud to have consistently contributed to the management, through international cooperation, of a number of conflict situations and areas of instability. I pay my deepest respect to the men and women of Romania who have lost their lives and those who are risking their lives in conflict areas, as well as to all the military, police, gendarmes and civilian personnel serving all over the world to bring peace and security.

We must reaffirm our determination to accomplish the commitments made at the outset of the United Nations-mandated international mission in Afghanistan. While we welcome the results of the latest conferences in London and Kabul and note the progress in ensuring the stability, security and development of that sorely tried nation, we look forward to the moment when the Afghan authorities will be ready to assume the entire spectrum of responsibilities incumbent upon them.

Romania firmly supports the continued involvement of the United Nations and the international community in the reconstruction of Iraq and is ready to carry on helping. The success of the sovereign development of Iraq depends on national reconciliation and the development of harmonious relations with its neighbours.

As regards the issue of Kosovo, Romania continues to uphold politically and practically the essential United Nations mandate there, as well as the roles of the European Union and NATO in ensuring the progress, stability and security of the area. While respecting the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, Romania considers that the opinion does not examine the core of the issue, which is the legality of the creation of an alleged new State. Romania maintains the view that unilateral secession is not possible under international law. Accordingly, Romania will maintain its position of non-recognition of Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence.

We continue to be concerned with the protracted conflicts in the extended Black Sea area and South Caucasus. While solutions to these conflicts continue to be explored in the agreed formats, they must also be monitored by the larger United Nations membership, as a way to encourage dialogue and to ensure that developments remain within the boundaries of international law and United Nations resolutions.

In Georgia, which is among Romania's top priorities, the United Nations must continue to play an important role, along with other actors such as the European Union, which through its Monitoring Mission contributes immensely to the stability of the area.

Furthermore, we support the Middle East peace process on the basis of the principles and provisions of the relevant Security Council resolutions and of the road map. We express our hope that the current direct discussions will lead to the goal of two States living side by side in peace and security. We also hope that Israel and Syria and Israel and Lebanon can identify the means needed to find solutions to improve their respective relations.

Concerning the crucial role of the United Nations in the area of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control, I would like to underline the need to both strengthen the relevance of international law and to fully implement it.

Romania welcomes the new United States-Russian Federation treaty on nuclear arms reduction and the adoption of the Final Document of the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which contains concrete actions to advance international cooperation in the field of nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and peaceful use of nuclear energy. The entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and future negotiations for a fissile material cut-off treaty continue to be issues of high interest for my country.

The efforts evoked in my address require a vibrant multilateralism with a strong United Nations at its core. That premise demands, in turn, improved functional relations between the United Nations and other international organizations with a global or regional vocation.

The roles of the European Union, NATO, the African Union, the International Organization of la Francophonie and others in working jointly with the United Nations in the field and at Headquarters must be supported and reinforced by all Member States. At the same time, the wide-ranging process of realignment and reform of the United Nations and its bodies must maintain the same pace.

In that context, I would like to warmly welcome the creation of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women as a significant step in United Nations reform. We congratulate Madame Michelle Bachelet, former President of Chile, for her appointment as head of that entity and wish her every success. At the same time, I would like to commend Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the entire Organization for their exceptional dedication and commitment to the advancement of women.

The sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly gives us another year in which we must accelerate the Assembly's renewal and work out historic decisions on Security Council reform. Romania shares the view that the overarching goal of Security Council reform must be to create a more effective, transparent and representative body, and my country will join any pragmatic move in this direction. We strongly believe that the Eastern European Group deserves better representation on the Security Council in any enlargement format.

Let me conclude by saying that our role and position in the world's affairs are not defined by our greatest achievements, but by how we use those achievements to strengthen the most vulnerable among us. That has been and still is the noblest mission and vocation of the United Nations, and of us all.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Romania for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Emil Boc, Prime Minister of Romania, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Stephenson King, Prime Minister of Saint Lucia

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly will now hear as address by the Prime Minister of Saint Lucia.

Mr. Stephenson King, Prime Minister of Saint Lucia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Stephenson King, Prime Minister of Saint Lucia, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. King (Saint Lucia): In my address on the accomplishments and shortfalls of Saint Lucia towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals, I stressed that all of our gains would be useless if we could not address the threatening saga of adverse climate change. Many other nations highlighted that urgent issue, and I hope that our collective voices will receive the attention of those most capable of acting.

I will therefore focus on two of the most critical factors in our development as small island developing States (SIDS): first, the effects of global climate change, and second, the uncertain economic and financial crisis.

Saint Lucia notes the ongoing negotiations in advance of the sixteenth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in Cancún, Mexico, later this year. Following the fifteenth Conference of the Parties, which failed to achieve consensus on a legally binding framework for addressing climate change, Saint Lucia recognizes the critical importance of the current talks in laying a solid foundation for a more favourable outcome in Cancún, one that will truly fulfil the purpose of the Convention and help to ensure the continued existence of humankind.

We have long since moved past the debate over the existence of climate change to a discussion about the severity of its impacts on the nations and regions of the world. The small island developing States of the world, Saint Lucia included, are recognized as being among the most vulnerable to climate change, with that phenomenon threatening the very existence of some of our island nations. That is so despite the fact that, jointly, the SIDS contribute a fraction of one per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions.

We began this year with news that a cataclysmic earthquake had hit Haiti. The United Nations came together in solidarity with our sister island and pledged $1.5 billion in assistance. To date, Haiti's officials report that only 10 per cent of the pledges have been funded. The same seems to be true for most appeals for humanitarian causes. We trust that the pledging conference for Pakistan, the most recent country to be hit by a catastrophe, will be more successful.

Addressing the humanitarian consequences of today's disasters and emergencies remains a United Nations priority. We thank those who have kept their pledges, while we encourage those who have shown good intentions but have not yet matched words with action to do so with some urgency.

For those reasons, for the good of all humankind and indeed, for the good of all creation, Saint Lucia, like all member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) is committed to lending its efforts to achieving an ambitious, just and legally binding agreement that will realize our goal of timely and successfully addressing climate change.

Speaking of justice, climate change can be successfully addressed only if countries most responsible take the necessary steps to reduce carbon dioxide emissions and provide adequate financial resources for the development and transfer of technology for both adaptation and mitigation to those who have been most seriously affected.

Few developing countries possess sufficient financial and human resources to address adequately the ongoing and anticipated impacts of global climate change. According to World Bank estimates, the total annual impact of potential climate change on all CARICOM countries could be, in 2007 dollar prices, $9.9 billion of our total gross national product (GDP), or about 11.3 per cent of total GDP. That means that we have no choice but to divert critical funding from our poverty alleviation programmes to trying to protect our countries from that formidable threat.

There is no doubt that stable long-term funding is of critical importance to developing countries and cannot be underestimated. We urgently need to scale up new and additional resources and sources of funding to support mitigation efforts. We cannot rely on humanitarian assistance alone, which only addresses the consequences of such events.

We know that our development partners are serious about implementing meaningful mitigation action, so we call for a firm collective commitment to providing new and additional resources. Let us not continue to renege on promises made, as developing States cannot go it alone and should not be penalized for the actions of industrialized countries. We call for an understanding partnership in tackling the pressing issues that threaten to engulf our world.

Despite our geographic distribution, small island developing States (SIDs) are working diligently together on shared concerns through regional and international networks, the most notable of which is the Alliance of Small Island States. We recognize that traditional hydrocarbon fuel usage is unsustainable and are therefore looking to make use of the alternate energy sources that are available to us. The use of hydropower, wind, solar and geothermal sources and converting waste into energy are means by which we could reduce our energy reliance, lower trade deficits and generate employment. However, those require investment in research, development and infrastructure.

The other most critical factor in our development is the speed of the global economy's return to sustained growth. Recent news of deteriorating economic conditions and a fall in house sales in the United States has fanned the flame of fears of a double-dip recession. Over the past few weeks, the short-term growth prospects of the United States, Europe and Japan have been downgraded on the back of recently released economic data, which is below expectations.

The prospects for economic recovery in Europe were dampened by the crisis in some countries earlier this year, but renewed confidence has recently emerged, spurred by the stronger-than-expected performance of the German economy in the second quarter of 2010. However, the growth prospects for Europe remain uncertain, given that fiscal retrenchment measures could pose a risk to growth and the pace of recovery. The weakened growth prospects for the United States and Europe could impede growth in emerging markets, with a slowdown in the growth of exports and investment flows. The uneven pace of the global economic recovery in countries and regions has led to differences in approach in policy responses.

I have made these points because the economies of the United States, Europe and the European Union are our major sources of tourism, agricultural trade, official development assistance, foreign direct investment (FDI) and remittances, which constitute the mainstays of our economy. We therefore urge the focus on global economic recovery to be maintained for the benefit of the global community.

As a small island developing State with a highly open economy, Saint Lucia has been hard hit by the effects of the global financial and economic crisis. As with most small developing countries, the crisis led to a deterioration in Saint Lucia's economy, resulting in a contraction in GDP, a rise in the level of unemployment and a weakening of the Government's fiscal position.

The decline in economic activity was driven mainly by a fall in stay-over tourist arrivals, lower production in the agricultural sector and a sharp downturn in construction. The decline in activity in the construction sector was attributable to a fall in FDI inflows as the freeze in international credit adversely affected the financing of a number of hotel construction projects in Saint Lucia. It was also attributable to a decline in remittances, which have helped sustain the local housing sector.

Notwithstanding the decline in revenue collection, expenditure outlays increased, resulting in a deteriorating fiscal position. That outcome led to a widening of the central Government's overall fiscal deficit to 4.8 per cent of GDP in the financial year 2009-2010, compared to a deficit of 1.9 per cent of GDP in the previous year. Public debt as a percentage of GDP rose from 66 per cent in 2008 to 71 per cent in 2009 as a result of increases in borrowing to finance the budget deficit.

The adverse impacts of the combination of global and regional shocks have prompted the Government of Saint Lucia to implement a number of measures designed to mitigate the social, fiscal and regulatory challenges of the crisis. In order to mitigate the impacts of the price shocks, the Government implemented a number of measures to protect the most vulnerable in our population.

Such measures included the creation of short-term employment programmes, the suspension of import duties and other taxes on basic consumer items, the establishment of controls on retail markups and profit margins on some basic food items, and the provision of limited price subsidies on basic commodities to vulnerable groups.

In its strategic response to the crisis and in laying the foundation for growth, the Government of Saint Lucia has undertaken the development of a medium-term development strategy plan for the period 2011-2016. The plan will lay the blueprint for the development of emerging new sources of growth, such as offshore education, health and wellness tourism, and high–end information and communications technology, and for expanding existing critical sectors, such as tourism, agriculture and manufacturing.

The signing of the economic partnership agreement with the European Union in 2008, the implementation of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy and the Economic Union of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States will bring new sets of challenges and opportunities for Saint Lucia. The Government's strategic priority is to develop meaningful partnerships with the private sector to meet the challenges and take advantage of the opportunities provided. The capacity of the private sector will be strengthened to take advantage of the opportunities presented by such trading arrangements.

However, the Government recognizes that this will require a host of general improvements in the business environment, including strengthening the investment climate, expanding the skills base, promoting innovation and technology adoption, and improving international transport services and other infrastructure. All those will require large capital outlays.

While the Government has responded to the challenges by developing specific programmes and projects to improve the business climate in Saint Lucia, the role of international financial institutions and bodies like the Group of 20 in stabilizing the global economy and restoring growth is crucial to small developing countries like Saint Lucia. As the focus of the global recovery efforts is aimed at laying the foundation for sustainable and balanced growth, Saint Lucia, through its new policy directives and programmes, is positioning itself to benefit from the growth prospects for the global economy.

In that respect, we call for a review of the United Nations delivery to SIDS, and particularly for strengthened support measures to address the vulnerabilities of all SIDS and for support within the United Nations system for a special category. Most SIDS do not get our fair share of assistance because we fall into the middle-income country category. However, being middle-income does not reduce vulnerability. There is a greater need for advocacy and a resource-mobilization role for SIDS under the Mauritius Strategy for the further implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.

The support of the international community is therefore necessary if Saint Lucia and all other SIDS are to fulfil the goal of sustainable development and thereby improve the standards of living of their populations and meet all of the MDGs by the year 2015.

Let me now, touch briefly on our moral environment. Among all the disasters we face today, we can accept some as natural occurrences, yet others are of our own making. Conflicts brought about by differences in ideology, political persuasion, religion and economic circumstance have presented challenges to global peace and security, including the many mass atrocities that the world has witnessed. Even with numerous advances in technology, education and health and an increase in material progress, the world seems to suffer from mental restlessness and discontent. We seem not to have found the formula for peacekeeping and peacemaking within nations, even after 60 years of searching.

Keeping the peace and building peace are critical components of sustainable development worldwide. But peacekeeping goes far beyond civilian conflict. We are pleased to note that there is now acceptance of the relationship between such non-traditional security issues as poverty and health, on the one hand, and conflict on the other. Maybe with that new understanding we will help find a solution.

We understand that the United Nations is incapable of solving all the world's discordant issues and that the best solutions for conflict are home-grown. However, there are identified areas where the United Nations can realistically make a difference. Where this is the case, we need to strengthen the role of the United Nations in the promotion of peace and economic development. In this regard, and while keeping our goals realistic, we look forward to Security Council reform. We need an equitable international system and a more balanced approach to international security.

We acknowledge that States remain the principal duty-bearers and cannot abrogate their responsibility to

implement policies, enact national legislation and foster an enabling environment in which human rights can be enjoyed by all. When these rights go unexercised, economic growth is stunted and development is paralysed. A key role of the United Nations is to help ensure that economic growth translates into wider enjoyment of human rights for all. Without human rights, we cannot achieve the Millennium Development Goals; we cannot achieve the advancement of humankind. When we expect the United Nations to protect human rights, we hold the same expectations of ourselves. After all, we are the United Nations.

Also integrated within the issue of human rights is human security. As Members of the United Nations, we are concerned with human life, education, longevity and social inclusion. There would be no United Nations if there were no universal concern for the well-being of the collective. Respect for human rights and the protection of human security are therefore mutually reinforcing.

Most people want peace, democracy and social equity, and we recognize the State's inherent responsibility to provide these for its citizens. If Governments are to be successful, people must participate in formulating and implementing strategies to enhance their national authorities' capacity to achieve these goals. However, with globalization, the ever-evolving threats that arise when one country falls to maintain the social order ricochet to affect the rest of the world. Every State requires international cooperation to preserve its own security.

We Caribbean countries take the issue of security very seriously. We suffer from an increasing incidence of crime and violence, which is compounded by relatively easy access to and use of illegal firearms. The number of gun-related homicides has jumped to unacceptable levels, and this has been aggravated by a worsened economic situation.

Another great tragedy of our times is the uncontrolled illicit drug trade. We must find solutions to both problems. We are perplexed, therefore, to see the closure of the Caribbean office of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. We call for a reassessment of that decision. We also call for a comprehensive treaty on small arms and light weapons, alongside the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Small arms and light weapons are responsible for more deaths than natural causes in some parts of the world.

In attempting to fulfil our commitments on the MDGs, we have engaged many partners, including the United States, the European Union, Canada, our Latin American neighbours, India, Japan and South Korea, to name but a few. I wish, though, to make a special appeal to this body to support the aspirations of the Republic of China on Taiwan to make its contribution to the world collaboration through membership and effective participation in the air transport and health bodies and climate change discussions, including the International Civil Aviation Organization, the World Health Organization, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and other organizations of a universal nature.

The contribution of Taiwan to countries that have sought its assistance in these areas matches that of any other, and it has helped without asking for much in return. No country should be prevented from making its contribution to humankind, for they do share the world with us and their contribution to health and environmental issues know no boundaries.

Increased concern for air safety also remains a global priority. We therefore hope that ongoing cross-Strait talks will lead to a peaceful solution. This is a long-standing problem that deserves an urgent resolution that is acceptable to all and in keeping with the Charter and principles of the United Nations, as well as the aspirations of peoples to self-development and progress.

There are some anachronisms that still persist in this world, and one is the embargo against Cuba. We have moved into a world where political uncertainty has been replaced by economic uncertainty. Yet a mechanism that was put in place to deal with a political issue remains today and is being used for economic strangulation, even as we appeal to everyone else for cooperation and understanding in other areas. We must respect the freely expressed wishes of the people of our region as well as their right to shape and chart their destiny. Our region is diverse, but our aspirations are shared. Only mutual respect will foster the relationship that is so necessary and vital to the development of our region.

Here again, permit me to make another point regarding respect. When the World Trade Organization (WTO) ruled against our preferential regime on

bananas, we were told that we had to comply. Now that the WTO has ruled in favour of our efforts in the services sector — I am speaking here of the favourable ruling we received on the gaming dispute referred to the WTO by Antigua and Barbuda — there is reluctance to comply. We cannot have double standards. We therefore urge all parties to agree on mutually agreed principles that govern the conduct of relations among States, large or small, in order for everyone to be treated fairly.

Our world is in crisis. We face a growing, more aggressive realm where the insatiable appetite for the world's resources has led to the subversion of justice and humanity. The tumultuous times that we live in can be weathered only through continued and increased commitment to human development. Let us all work towards that goal and the sustainability of biodiversity and humankind.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Saint Lucia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Stephenson King, Prime Minister of Saint Lucia, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): In view of the late hour, I would ask all speakers to limit their statements insofar as possible to a total of 15 minutes so that everyone will be able to take the floor.

I now call on His Excellency Mr. Murray McCully, Minister for Foreign Affairs of New Zealand.

Mr. McCully (New Zealand): It is an honour to lead New Zealand's delegation this year. The opening of the General Assembly's new session is the best example there is of the capacity of the United Nations to bring us all together. Our discussions here will be wide-ranging, but inevitably settle on two main issues: global security and sustainable economic development.

We want to make our world safer, more secure and more prosperous. These goals will require strong collective action with a focus on practical outcomes. New Zealand is seeking every opportunity to contribute. We are a young, small and fair-minded country. We depend upon a United Nations that is effective and credible.

New Zealand takes pride in its diversity. In addition to our indigenous Maori population, we are a mix of people from Europe, Asia and the Pacific. Our links with Europe are built on history and tradition. Within Asia, we are developing ever-stronger economic and security relationships. Our future is closely tied to both of these regions. We have an equally strong focus on our closest neighbours in the South Pacific. New Zealand is a Pacific country. Auckland is the largest Pasifika city in the world, and a number of Pacific countries have more citizens living in New Zealand than at home.

The security and development of the region is New Zealand's constant preoccupation. It is a matter of grave concern that the South Pacific is second only to sub-Saharan Africa in terms of lack of progress towards the achievement of some of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). We want to see the MDGs achieved, and we want to see the wider Pacific prosper through good governance and sustainable economic development. That is why New Zealand is increasingly deploying our development resources within its region, since that is where they are most needed and where they can be most effective.

The development challenges in the Pacific are extremely complex, with vulnerable economies and challenging environmental circumstances. New Zealand has increased and will continue to increase our overall level of development assistance, despite challenging times for our domestic economy. A higher percentage of that larger budget will be focused on our region.

But money alone is not enough; aid effectiveness and donor coordination are vital. Progress will also depend on good governance within the region.

Next year we will mark the fortieth anniversary of the Pacific Islands Forum, the central body for regional engagement in the Pacific, which held its first meeting in New Zealand in 1971. We will welcome leaders from around the region back to New Zealand next September to celebrate our achievements over 40 years and to take stock of the challenges we must face in the future.

The past year has reinforced the need for better disaster management. Just three weeks ago, residents in Christchurch woke to the most destructive earthquake in New Zealand in 80 years. Miraculously, there was no loss of life, but the damage runs into billions of dollars and people's lives and livelihoods were affected. Significant aftershocks are still affecting the

population. But less than a month after the earthquake hit, roads and buildings have been repaired, tourism infrastructure is at almost full capacity, and people's lives are being rebuilt.

Others have not been so lucky. The earthquakes in Haiti and Chile and the recent flooding in Pakistan are reminders of the devastating scale of such disasters. The Pacific has been hit hard, too. This month will mark the first anniversary of the Pacific tsunami that took the lives of 184 people in Samoa, American Samoa and Tonga.

These events and others demonstrate the importance of disaster preparedness, management and recovery. New Zealand's experience with major earthquakes has taught us how to mitigate risks, enforce strong building codes, and implement effective recovery plans. But there will be lessons we should learn from this recent experience. We will work with the United Nations system, non-governmental organizations and other international agencies to ensure that those lessons are shared and help others to prepare.

While development and disaster management are crucial to our quest for a safer world, underpinning both is security. Peacekeeping is a key responsibility of the Organization. Indeed, it is its peacekeeping operations that shape perceptions of the United Nations for many people around the world.

New Zealand is committed to supporting global security and United Nations peacekeeping. That is why we have been engaged in peacekeeping and peace support operations since the 1940s. New Zealand's soldiers, police, engineers, corrections and customs officers, doctors and other personnel are today involved in 12 operations that span the globe from Africa, Afghanistan and the Middle East to Asia and the Pacific.

One of the clearest examples of New Zealand's commitment to the principles of collective responsibility is through the United Nations effort in Timor-Leste. Since 1999, New Zealand has been a part of every United Nations mission that has served in Timor-Leste. We have played a major role in the United Nations-sanctioned international military operations that restored order there in 1999 and again in 2006. Over 6,000 New Zealanders have served in Timor in the past decade — a significant undertaking for a country of only 4.4 million people.

Of course, helping ensure peace and stability in our region alone is not enough. New Zealanders are among those who have been affected by terrorism, killed in the attacks that took place just a few blocks away from here in September 2001, and more recently in Bali, in London and in Jakarta.

The need to respond decisively to those who perpetrate such atrocities is a key reason why New Zealand has led the provincial reconstruction team in Bamyan, Afghanistan, since 2003. We have redeployed our special forces to work alongside the Government of Afghanistan and the international community to ensure that that country does not return to being a safe haven for Al-Qaida. We must address the conditions in which terrorism thrives. We are increasing our development spending in Bamyan and recently placed the Provincial Reconstruction Team under civilian leadership for the first time.

New Zealand is also strongly supportive of peacekeeping reform. The expansion in peacekeeping since 1990 has been dramatic. Never before has this Organization deployed so many missions to such complex environments. This expansion has opened up discussion of the way the United Nations conducts its peacekeeping operations. Clear and achievable mandates are needed, progress needs to be better monitored, and efficiency needs to be improved.

We are also contributing to United Nations efforts to strengthen peacebuilding in practice, including the need for better participation of women in peacebuilding. Of course, the response of the United Nations to crises has not always been successful. It is for this reason that New Zealand has strongly supported the responsibility to protect (R2P). We were pleased to contribute to the proposed joint Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide/R2P office and look forward to the more comprehensive implementation of R2P throughout the United Nations system.

Effective pursuit of these goals — countering terrorism and maintaining peace and security — demands coordinated, collective action. The United Nations is the best vehicle for that action. New Zealand has been, and remains, proud to be a part of that community of collective action. In line with that commitment, New Zealand is seeking a seat on the Security Council for the 2015-2016 term. In doing so,

we will work with others here who want the world to be a safer and more prosperous place.

This year significant gains have been made in global disarmament. New Zealand welcomes the action plan adopted at this year's Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference, the groundbreaking nuclear security summit, and the entry into force of the Convention on Cluster Munitions. These are tangible and practical successes. But we still face some significant challenges. New Zealand is concerned by the continuing inertia of the Conference on Disarmament. The Secretary-General's High-level Meeting on disarmament this morning was a valuable step in acknowledging this problem and trying to find a way forward.

As a country that prides itself on sustainable development, New Zealand is also greatly concerned about global environmental issues. As well as working towards an outcome in Cancún, we are involved in practical projects for addressing climate change. One such project is the Global Research Alliance on Agricultural Greenhouse Gases. Fourteen per cent of worldwide greenhouse-gas emissions come from agriculture. At the same time, there are projections that world food production needs to increase by 50 per cent in the next 20 years, and to double in the next 40 years, to feed a growing world.

Clearly, we need a scientific breakthrough to help meet the challenge of producing more food while reducing emissions. New Zealand formed the Alliance, which now includes more than 30 agricultural nations, to find ways to address this problem. Scientists and researchers are now linking up across the world to try to balance the need for increased agricultural production with the need to address climate change. This is just one example of how countries can come together to address climate change in a very real way.

When I was here a year ago, we were watching to see whether the world would be able to climb out of the global economic recession. Much progress has been made and key economic indicators are generally pointing in the right direction. The rapid and coordinated international response, including by the Group of 20, has been effective. The World Trade Organization's rules-based trading system has held up well. But, like many countries, New Zealand is frustrated that the conclusion of the Doha Development Round still eludes us.

Over these last few days, especially in the context of discussion of progress towards the Millennium Development Goals, I have heard many fine words spoken in support of the world's disadvantaged. I take this opportunity to remind those speakers and countries that the single most effective step that could be taken to advance the position of the world's disadvantaged would be to create a framework within which they can trade themselves to a better future.

I want to strongly endorse President Obama's statement, made yesterday, that there is no viable alternative to the resolution of conflict in the Middle East other than two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security. We believe that direct negotiations, with both parties at the table, are the only way to resolve the conflict. We congratulate President Abbas and Prime Minister Netanyahu on having the courage to negotiate in very difficult circumstances. We ask that Israel heed the international community's unanimous call to extend the moratorium on settlements and create the enabling atmosphere that will allow direct negotiations to continue.

We also agree with President Obama that resolution of the Middle East conflict is not just the responsibility of Israel and Palestine. Countries in the region especially, but also countries elsewhere, must work towards Middle East peace. New Zealand, as a friend of both Israel and Palestine, will play its part. I recently visited the Sinai, where a New Zealand officer has command of the Multinational Force and Observers. I was reminded that there has been peace between Israel and Egypt for more than 30 years, a prospect once unthinkable. With the commitment of the two parties and the support of the international community, Israel and Palestine can enjoy the same freedom from conflict. We all have a huge stake in achieving that objective. Resolution of the Palestinian question would tear out the fuse that threatens to ignite conflict in the Middle East and beyond.

So today we add our voice to that of President Obama and of others who believe that this dispute can, and must, be solved. And we call on all Members of the United Nations to lend their support to this process in the critical weeks ahead.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Össur Skarphéðinsson, Minister for Foreign Affairs and External Trade of the Republic of Iceland.

Mr. Skarphéðinsson (Iceland): Let me start by congratulating His Excellency Mr. Joseph Deiss on his election to the presidency at the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly, and assuring him of the fullest cooperation of the Icelandic delegation.

When I spoke for the first time from this distinguished rostrum last year, my country was ravaged by financial crisis. It left Iceland with a total collapse of the entire banking system. Our financial crisis was exacerbated by the worldwide recession, but I have to tell you, honestly, that to a large extent it was made in Iceland. It was the product of a system that embraced the neo-liberalistic view of rampant capitalism with lax regulations. Economic emergency laws had to be passed. And we needed the helping hand of our close family in the North, the Nordic nations, not least the Faroese, and our friends the Poles, in the form of currency loans, just to prevent our society from melting down.

Now we have swallowed the bitter medicine of fiscal cuts and radical financial reforms. We have embarked on close cooperation with the International Monetary Fund. And Iceland has now applied for membership of the European Union, on which the Icelandic people will decide in a referendum in due course.

A specially appointed prosecutor is now handling the cases of bankers who allegedly broke the law, and this week, parliament in Iceland is debating whether to prosecute former ministers. So we took firm, decisive action.

Well, I can tell you, the medicine worked. Iceland is pulling through. We are finally on the road to recovery. We are blessed with ample resources in the form of fish in the ocean, the fierce power of our waterfalls and geothermal geysers and a pristine natural environment that supports a flourishing tourism sector. Economic growth is, finally, returning to Iceland.

I am therefore very happy to inform the Assembly that, this summer, the International Monetary Fund declared that, technically, the recession in Iceland is over. I want to use this opportunity to thank Member States for their support and their understanding.

The crisis turned our eyes back to what really matters in life, the core values of democracy and human rights. At home, we have taken important steps to change the Constitution to increase the people's power. We are also proud of having legally ensured full equality for same-sex partnerships, and we strongly urge other nations to remove all discrimination based on sexual orientation.

As the Assembly knows, our foreign policy has always reflected the high priority we place on gender equality. This year, we celebrate 95 years since women first gained the right to vote and 30 years ago since a woman was first elected President in Iceland. As members saw for themselves, with their own eyes, when the Icelandic Prime Minister spoke here this week, the Icelandic Government is now led by a woman.

In New York, we also have cause to celebrate. Iceland for years has supported a new and consolidated United Nations gender entity, and, look, today it is a reality. Well done, United Nations, you deserve a big pile of thanks for your vision and for your courage. I can state that Iceland will be a strong supporter of UN Women, just as we have been through the transitional phase.

There is also, I believe, another cause for this Assembly to celebrate, and that is the fact that next month we will celebrate the 10-year anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000). This has been a priority of the foreign policy of Iceland. Let the nations of the United Nations come together to celebrate by increasing the participation of women in peace negotiations. Empowering women is empowering society.

But it is exactly with reference to women's rights that we have learned with utter sadness about the decision of Iranian courts to stone to death an Iranian woman, Sakineh Mohammadi Ashtiani. President Ahmadinejad, on behalf of the Icelandic people, I ask you to spare Ashtiani.

When we address the looming dangers of climate change, human rights are also at stake. Climate change will wreak havoc on the lives of a great number of people. It will erode what we as an international community have defined as their basic human rights.

Let me take three different examples. The small island nations in the Pacific are threatened by rising sea levels to such an extent that whole nations might be forced to leave the land of their forebears — Kiribati, for instance. The floods in Pakistan caused death to many and devastation to tens of millions of people. The

melting of the Arctic ice may prevent my neighbours, the Inuits, from pursuing their traditional lifestyle based on hunting on the ice.

All this is aggravated by the limitless use of fossil fuels that is literally tipping the delicate balance of nature. We, the wealthy nations of the world, are therefore paying for the quality of our good life with the human rights of others. If we do not take drastic action, more radical action than what was agreed in Copenhagen, future generations will see ours as serial offenders against the human rights of peoples in need.

At the same time, millions of people lack access to safe drinking water and sanitation. It is a firm position of my Government that the right to safe drinking water and basic sanitation should be recognized as a human right, essential for the real and full enjoyment of life and all other human rights.

In the fight against climate change, Iceland tries to lead by example. We already meet 80 per cent of our energy needs through renewables, and that is far higher than any other nation can claim. We have campaigned for a new global climate fund with the goal of financing the transfer of green technologies to developing countries.

But we in Iceland also want to contribute in another way. As the Assembly knows, we have not been able to stop the volcanoes in Iceland from erupting with huge clouds of ash, but we have learned to harness the fierce power of the fire beneath, and put it to use as geothermal energy. Geothermal by itself, of course, will not solve all the climate problems, but in some parts of the world it could make a huge difference.

In East Africa, the utilization of geothermal potential could free the people of several nations from the bondage of energy poverty. They do, however, lack the geothermal expertise and the finances for the infrastructure.

Iceland, therefore, has formally engaged in discussions with some of the big nations operating, for example, in East Africa to form a partnership for a geothermal drive in countries with unused potential. Iceland would put up the expertise, the partners the necessary financing. This initiative could enable some countries to escape from energy poverty, industrialize without undue emissions and embark on the road to prosperity.

I have spent almost this entire speech of mine tonight talking about human rights in one form or another, and human rights cannot be debated without discussing the plight of the Palestinians and the people of Gaza. We now have the results of the experts, mandated by the Human Rights Council, who concluded that Israel broke international law by attacking the flotilla bringing humanitarian assistance to Gaza last spring.

Iceland has strongly condemned the raid. It drew a strong reaction from Icelandic society at large. I can tell the Assembly that the Icelandic nation is deeply sympathetic to the plight of the Palestinians, held in occupation by an oppressing Power. As I speak, we have Icelandic humanitarian workers being held up in Israel, trying to bring prosthetic feet to people in Gaza who have lost their limbs, people that urgently need assistance. This is not acceptable to Iceland. This is not acceptable to the world. This is inhuman and unjust, and we urge Israel not to prevent humanitarian assistance from reaching the needy in Gaza.

Yesterday, we heard President Obama urge patience, but we also heard a hidden hope in his words. Well, we know that sometimes dreams come true. Sometimes the unexpected happens. Sometimes we even have miracles. We in Iceland will, of course, strongly support the resumed direct talks, and let us all hope and pray for a solution that will allow us, as soon as possible, to welcome the independent State of Palestine as the 193rd member of the United Nations family.

In the meantime, all of us should use every possible, sensible way to demonstrate our solidarity with the people of Palestine. My country, Iceland, was not afraid to stand up and be counted on behalf of the people in the Baltic States almost 20 years ago, when Iceland was the first country to break the ice and recognize their independence. The same happened with regard to Croatia, Slovenia and later Montenegro. And today Iceland is not afraid to stand up for the Palestinian people either. Every nation has a duty to defend human rights. Every nation has a duty to speak up. That is no less true for Palestine, where human rights are broken — especially in Gaza — every day.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Basile Ikouebe, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Republic of the Congo.

Mr. Ikouebe (Congo) (*spoke in French*): As we open this session of the General Assembly the world is still facing problems of peace and security, crises, conflicts, inequality among States, poverty, hunger and disease. To those recurrent problems are added new challenges, such as climate change, natural disasters, terrorism, piracy, transnational organized crime, human trafficking, nuclear proliferation and the world economic and financial crisis. All these many issues by their very nature call out to the whole of the international community and demand global, collective, coordinated solutions.

The United Nations because of its global nature offers now more than ever the best framework for finding lasting solutions. To do that, we need a strong, reformed Organization that can respond to the new demands of our time. In this connection, my delegation welcomes the new entity UN Women and the appointment at its head of the former President of Chile, Michelle Bachelet — a brilliant woman, to whom I wish every success.

We will need to work with determination to bring about the reforms necessary to restore to the United Nations its operation as a global Organization and to make it a real instrument of world governance. The process must continue with reform of the Security Council, both in its membership and its working methods. Also we should continue to deal with the matter of how to strengthen the General Assembly and its role.

The High-level Plenary Meeting on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that ended 22 September culminated in the adoption of an outcome document (resolution 65/1) that exhorts us to keep our promises. We welcome it. Indeed, we must unite to attain these Goals. As I said at that time, just two days ago, Congo's commitment to reaching the MDGs remains firm.

While ten years after the Goals were announced the overall results in achieving them are mixed, especially in Africa, it is nevertheless undeniable that major advances have been made in Africa during that same period in such other essential areas as peace, security and democracy. Africa as a whole is increasingly emerging from a cycle of armed conflicts that have greatly worked against its forward progress towards development and prosperity. Today, thanks to the efforts of the African Union, the backing of the international community and the involvement of African leaders themselves, many conflicts have been or are being resolved. With that in mind, 2010 has been named a year of peace and security in Africa.

Despite difficulties encountered here and there in carrying out electoral processes, in a general way democracy is undeniably making a home in Africa. In Gabon and Burundi, to mention only those two countries, the popular will has expressed itself freely. We nurture the hope that the elections upcoming in the next months, notably in Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, the Niger, Nigeria, the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, will play out in a climate of calm. That is likewise our hope for the referendum to be held in South Sudan, as called for in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. In this connection we call on the international community to continue supporting that process until it is completed.

On the subject of Central Africa, the United Nations Office about to open will provide an additional tool, besides existing mechanisms, to promote good governance and build peace, cooperation and development. In the same vein of building confidence and peace in our subregion, from 15-19 November Brazzaville will be hosting the thirty-first meeting of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa. On that occasion the States of the subregion will seal their commitment to fight the traffic in small arms and light weapons, by signing the Kinshasa Convention.

Since the tragic events that brought such suffering to my country in the 1990s and early 2000s, the Congolese Government has invested in the quest for peace and national reconciliation, and works to preserve that precious accomplishment. Moreover, our good neighbour policy — a policy we have always advocated — is one of the pillars of our foreign policy. It is evident today in the way in which we are handling the humanitarian crisis resulting from the arrival in our territory of over 100,000 nationals from Equateur Province in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The signing this past 10 June of the tripartite accord among the Republic of the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees should make possible an imminent resolution of the problem and contribute to stabilizing the situation in our brother country so in need of peace and security, especially on the eve of its elections.

Here I would like to thank the all the bilateral and multilateral partners, namely France, Italy, the United States of America, the World Food Programme and the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees, for all the assistance they have graciously given us.

We have just dedicated a high-level segment to biodiversity in this year 2010, which has been proclaimed the International Year of Biodiversity. Yet another new challenge of our age, biodiversity is crucial to life on earth and holds especial interest for the Congo, since we are one of the countries that houses the Congo Basin, a major carbon sink. We have no doubt that the results of this segment will resonate into the upcoming meetings in Nagoya, Japan, in October and in Cancún, Mexico, in November and December.

The President of our Republic, Denis Sassou Nguesso, holds the question of biodiversity to be of critical global importance, because tropical forests play a vital role in regulating and stabilizing the global climate and generally in providing environmental services. In this context, the Copenhagen Agreement, which took into account the process of reducing emissions from deforestation and degradation, known as REDD-plus, represented the culmination of major efforts deployed by the three forest basins, the Amazon Basin in South and Central America, the Congo Basin in Central Africa and the Mekong Basin in South-East Asia.

With our partners in dialogue and cooperation of the Forest eleven tropical rainforest countries, the Republic of the Congo reaffirms its will and determination to meet the challenges of conservation and the promotion of biodiversity. Such an effort can bring about lasting results only if it is supported by additional financing that is sustainable and predictable.

The question of human rights is also on the agenda for this session. My Government promotes human rights because they are so closely related to peace and development. With regard to human rights, the Congo has always acted within the process of international legitimacy. That is evident in the philosophy underpinning our Constitution, in what we do on a day-to-day basis and in our extensive participation in the relevant international instruments.

Domestically, besides promulgating a law on the protection of the child in the Republic of the Congo, our Parliament will shortly adopt a *bill on promoting* and protecting the rights of indigenous peoples, which the Government has just submitted to it. The Republic of the Congo has undertaken a number of initiatives in this field, thus taking an important step towards recognizing, defending and protecting the rights of minorities. Next November, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous people will visit Brazzaville. That will be an opportune moment for dialogue and consultations on matters related to indigenous peoples. It should also help us speed up the implementation of recommendations of the universal periodic review, a Human Rights Council mechanism of which my country was the subject from 6 to 8 May 2009 in Geneva.

My country is a candidate for membership in the Human Rights Council for the period from 2011 to 2014, and we thus reaffirm our commitment to fulfilling our international commitments and to supporting efforts of the international community to strengthening those rights. I therefore take this opportunity to appeal for the Assembly's support for our candidacy in the elections, which will be held in May 2011.

On 15 August 2010, my country celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of its independence. The day was devoted to the theme of remembering, but also and above all, of responsibilities and action. On that occasion, the Government announced a number of socio-economic measures to benefit our people. Those measures were made possible by the release of additional financial resources following the significant foreign debt relief because of Congo's accession to the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative. Those measures are part of the Government's resolve to move towards attaining the Millennium Development Goals.

Such an enabling situation will allow my country to lay the foundations for an emerging economy. Indeed, it is President Denis Sassou Nguesso's ambition to make Congo a modern and prosperous State that plays its part in the family of free modern nations. But that ambition, however legitimate, can be achieved only in a world that is safer, more just and with more solidarity.

More than ever before, we must return to the ideals that inspired the founding fathers of the League of Nations and the United Nations. We must place the

moral values and the deep aspirations of our peoples at the heart of our work. This is the world that we all aspire to. This is the world that we should strive to build in this Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on His Excellency Mario Canahuati, Secretary of State, Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Honduras.

Mr. Canahuati (Honduras) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the people and Government of Honduras, I wish to recognize Mr. Ali Abdussalam Treki for his leadership during the previous session. I also congratulate President Joseph Deiss on his election to the Assembly presidency and the Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, on his wise leadership of our Organization.

In this same house of the peoples of the United Nations, at the world summit on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), our President, Porfirio Lobo Sosa, highlighted the faith that our country has in this Organization and in its Charter for achieving a world that is more peaceful, prosperous and fair (see A/65/PV.3). As a founding Member of the United Nations and a peace-loving country, we reaffirm our obligations. As we have been working, ceaselessly and together with many other Member States, since the birth of the Organization, we will continue to work to fully realize the ideals enshrined in the San Francisco Charter.

Honduras — which is geographically small but great of spirit and generous in its democratic and peaceful vocation — has involved itself in the world, basing itself on the principles of equal rights, self-determination for peoples and non-interference in internal affairs.

The imperative of promoting economic and social progress for all nations moves us to acknowledge that the MDGs have been a first step in the right direction. We agree with Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon that the Millennium Goals are not easy, but they are achievable. However, the struggle against poverty requires additional efforts that recognize the fact that we have a collective responsibility to protect and share what the President of Honduras has called global common goods, including solidarity.

Another global good should be the prudent management of our economies. The financial crises have proven that that responsibility does not fall just to the developing countries. It is so important that, according to the World Bank, the recent crises in food, fuel and finances have sunk an additional 64 million human beings into poverty. Such crises can make our efforts to fight poverty more difficult or even impossible.

The opening of trade and of financial systems is another global good. Access to international markets is as important as official development assistance itself, although it does not replace it. We must add efforts to enable foreign direct investment in our developing nations; access to technology, in particular technology having to do with medications; the reduction of greenhouse gases; and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons.

The challenge of achieving the Millennium Development Goals before 2015 in a manner as responsible as possible lies with our Government. Given the results already achieved and what remains to be done, President Lobo Sosa has launched an appeal to start talks as soon as possible on a new global agreement that will guide our actions and goals after 2015.

We firmly believe that poverty is not only the shortage of material goods, but also the lack of opportunities. That is why we are committed to respect for human dignity, the common good, support and human solidarity. Those four principles are not just a moral imperative; in the case of Honduras, they are a national imperative.

In that regard, with broad consultation with civil society, the political parties and other independent sectors, we adopted a country vision and national plan that sets out four focal points for achieving our national goals, inspired by the Millennium Development Goals: a Honduras without poverty, educated and healthy, with robust social welfare systems; a Honduras that is developing in democracy, with security and without violence, with absolute respect for human rights; a productive Honduras that generates opportunities and decent jobs, that sustainably exploits its resources and that reduces environmental vulnerability; and a modern, transparent, responsible, efficient and competitive State, with fully independent branches of government.

The cohesion of our society, unity, reconciliation, governance, coexistence and peace all depend on achieving that. That is why we are engaged in building

an inclusive society, since no country is so poor that it cannot show solidarity with those that are even poorer.

Our first commitment is to helping people in extreme poverty through the "Bono 10,000" programme. Bono 10,000 is a credit programme that will greatly strengthen family economics and, furthermore, is conditional on steps to improve the access of the most vulnerable Hondurans to education, health care and nutrition through the broad dissemination of the School Snack scheme and other food security programmes.

We are strengthening the decentralization processes and improving citizen participation in the making, implementation, monitoring and assessment of public policies. We are also addressing social inequality by creating economic opportunities at the local level.

Productive programmes, such as the United States Millennium Challenge Corporation in Honduras, have had a huge impact on the recipients, resulting in a very significant increase in the income of the farmers participating in the programme. With the same aim of generating greater income for families, we have launched a programme to finance microbusinesses and small enterprises, thanks to the cooperation programmes of the European Union, Japan and Taiwan, as well as all those countries that are extending the hand of solidarity to our people.

In all those programmes, women are a particular target of our Government's efforts because we know that, along with the fight against poverty, we must combat gender inequality.

While we work at the local and community levels, we are also promoting private investment. The purpose is to create decent jobs for more than 200,000 young people who join the labour market annually. The Government of Honduras bases the successful implementation of its social agenda on a social market economy.

With those premises in mind, our Government has drawn up a national programme to promote investment for the period 2010 to 2014 in six main sectors: industries generating more and better jobs, agro-food and forestry production, clean generation of energy, tourism development, infrastructure to support manufacturing, and water and sanitation. We will develop those programmes within the new framework of the law on public-private partnerships, the law on rural and marginal urban employment, a new law on clean energy and the law on promoting and protecting investments.

With such efforts, a new era is opening in Honduras with the creation of conditions so that private business can boost sustained economic growth with social responsibility and the country is guided towards prosperity and stability.

Honduras is ready to better address the challenges of reducing its vulnerability to natural disasters and climate change. The law on land management makes it possible to utilize and protect the land properly, with responsible management of the natural resources. At the same time, we have launched a national risk management system.

Efforts to improve the social situation and to boost economic growth must be based on a legal and institutional foundation. There is a strong link between individual freedom and political stability with economic growth and social justice. Higher rates of economic growth that are sustainable over time also help to create the social conditions for governance, confidence and smaller political threats.

For 30 years, we Hondurans have strived to develop our democratic institutions. The international community has supported us throughout that process. At the end of the third decade of our democracy, we had an institutional system that had ceased to be the monopoly of the executive branch and that shared power more evenly among the judicial, legislative and executive organs.

Despite that progress, we underwent a political crisis, from which we emerged when the Honduran people turned out in huge numbers on 29 November 2009 to vote in the election with the greatest turnout and transparency in our electoral history. We Hondurans exercised our popular sovereignty and our right to self-determination. We sent an unequivocal message: we love democracy and our institutions, and we prefer dialogue to conflict. That is our message, which has been understood and respected by the great majority of the nations represented here. We wish it to be acknowledged by all Governments in the world.

In that spirit, President Porfirio Lobo Sosa endorsed a broad amnesty for political crimes and formed a Government of national unity, with the

participation of all the country's political parties. Furthermore, the President decreed the creation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission — a totally independent body that will ensure that the critical events of 2009 will never happen again. The work of the Commission is already under way, and its report is expected during the first quarter of next year. Its conclusions will be broadly disseminated and its recommendations will be implemented.

We are convinced that national reconciliation and unity are based on respect for all sectors of society irrespective of political or ideological position. Tolerance is and must be the foundation of democracy.

We are also convinced that the human rights and fundamental freedoms of citizens must be respected without restriction. The President of the Honduras has proposed to the National Congress the creation a Secretary of State for Justice to promote and take charge of designing, implementing, supervising and evaluating all public policies and ensuring that they are based squarely on human rights principles.

Inspired by our respect for human dignity, our Government condemns all forms of racial discrimination and enthusiastically welcomes the forthcoming launch of the International Year for People of African Descent. To implement our commitment against racial discrimination, Honduras is creating an entity for the development of indigenous peoples and Afro-Honduran people and a policy of racial equality.

In the context of those commitments any person deprived of liberty must be treated with the respect inherent in his human dignity. To that end, the President approved an executive decree aimed at reducing overcrowding in the penal institutions through renovation of their infrastructure and equipment.

Along that same line, the Government of Honduras has energetically condemned and continues to condemn human rights violations, especially violation of the right to life. We are firmly committed to the fight against impunity and will continue to make every possible effort to bring to justice those who violate that essential right of the human person.

We are thankful for the cooperation we have received so far in overcoming difficulties in guaranteeing security for our citizens. President Lobo Sosa has also asked Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to have the United Nations consider support for setting up a commission to fight impunity, in order to support national institutions and strengthen their capacities as they carry out their tasks in investigating and prosecuting crime. At the same time, we reiterate our Government's invitation to the agencies that make up the United Nations human rights system to follow up on the situation in Honduras.

I wish to convey the ongoing appreciation of Hondurans to the United Nations system and its Secretary-General for all the cooperation and assistance given our country. We thank all of those who have firmly supported Honduras, because that has benefited our people directly.

I want to highlight the solidarity and friendship that exist among the brothers of the Central American region. Within the Central American Integration System we will continue to go forward until our common homeland becomes one great nation, beyond the limits of the historic Central America.

Our Government is aware of the difficulties and challenges of the moment in history in which we are living, and we are taking decisions based on that awareness. Today I can state with conviction that we are moving along the path to prosperity, because I believe in the determination of the people of Honduras, their ability to deal with adversity, their hard work, their strength of heart and their sprit and hope. We have an unbreakable will; we have the human capital.

The time has come to reaffirm our commitment and to act in favour of the poorest members of society. The time has come to act in solidarity and with determination so that all human beings may be protected from discrimination and need. It is time to create a world with tolerance, with harmony and with freedom and security for all. The time to globalize social justice with freedom and democracy is now.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): We have heard the last speaker in the general debate for this meeting. One delegation has requested the right to reply.

Before giving the floor to the representatives who have asked to speak in exercise of the right of reply, I remind members that statements in exercise of the right of reply should be limited to 10 minutes for the first statement and 5 minutes for the second, and should be made by delegations from their seats.

I give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Salsabili (Islamic Republic of Iran): I have two points to clarify in exercise of the right of reply.

First, this morning the Prime Minister of the friendly State of Kuwait referred in his remarks to those Iranian islands located in the Persian Gulf. My delegation would like to make clear that there is no conflict whatsoever over those islands, as they are an eternal part of the Iranian territory and are under the sovereignty of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Therefore, we regret the use of inappropriate qualifications for these Iranian islands in the Persian Gulf.

It goes without saying that the Islamic Republic of Iran continues to spare no efforts in strengthening its good-neighbourly and brotherly relations with all neighbouring countries, including the Persian Gulf littoral States.

As a second point, my delegation would like to comment on the remarks of the Deputy Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, which was delivered this morning (see A/65/PV.14). The United Kingdom delegate made bizarre comments on a part of the address made by the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the General Assembly yesterday (see A/65/PV.12). President Ahmadinejad simply raised a number of questions concerning one of the main events of the past decade, which has affected all international relations and which has entailed wide consequences all over the world, including in my region.

We would submit that such a hasty and weird reaction only indicates the increasing level of intolerance and disregard for the freedom of expression and opinion as values for which, ironically, he regards himself as the sole advocate.

My delegation would like to assure the representative of the United Kingdom that the time has long passed when less than a handful of power centres dictated to world public opinion on how to think. I would also like to recall that the Islamic Republic of Iran was among the first nations that expressed a clear position that the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 constituted a cowardly and atrocious crime.

The meeting rose at 10.15 p.m.